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Sixty-seventh session

Official Records

14th plenary meeting
Thursday, 27 September 2012, 6 p.m.
New York

*President*: Mr. Jeremić ..... (Serbia)

*In the absence of the President, Mr. Momen (Bangladesh), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

*The meeting was called to order at 6.55 p.m.*

**Agenda item 8** (*continued*)

**General debate**

**Address by Mr. Najib Mikati, President of the Council of Ministers of the Lebanese Republic**

**The Acting President**: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Council of Ministers of the Lebanese Republic.

*Mr. Najib Mikati, President of the Council of Ministers of the Lebanese Republic, was escorted to the rostrum.*

**The Acting President**: I have great pleasure in welcoming Mr. Najib Mikati, President of the Council of Ministers of the Lebanese Republic, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

**Mr. Mikati** (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, allow me to congratulate Mr. Jeremić on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. I am confident that the Assembly's work will be crowned with success, thanks to his rich diplomatic experience and expertise. I assure him of Lebanon's full support in his efforts. I would also like to thank His Excellency Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, President of the Assembly at its sixty-sixth session, for his tireless efforts and remarkable achievements. I also extend my gratitude to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his keen concern over critical global issues, especially those related to the Middle East, in particular my country, Lebanon, which was mentioned in his annual report (A/67/1).

Lebanon, a founding State Member of the United Nations, reiterates its commitment to the noble principles and human values that make up the founding pillars of the Organization. Those standards enable it to act globally for justice, freedom, prosperity and peace and to shoulder its responsibility to address the world's ongoing challenges. Those challenges test the international Organization's credibility, efficiency, status, and role in ensuring social freedom, political stability and economic independence for all peoples of the world, free from hegemony, polarization, fear and double standards.

In the light of the major developments and changes that have occurred since the Second World War, it has become necessary to strengthen the role of the General Assembly as a universal organ. That should preclude the Security Council privileges, which are currently restricted to a limited number of countries that control crucial decisions, in particular those related to war and peace. In that regard, in order to ensure greater justice and democracy, the structure, privileges and expansion of the Security Council should be reconsidered. The new global political, economic and social realities should be taken into account by extending the membership so as to enable smaller countries to have greater representation. That would fulfil the United Nations principles of equality and justice among peoples.

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Our meeting today takes place at a time of major global developments and changes, in particular for Arab nations. Political reform had therefore become inevitable in order to achieve democracy and to lay the foundations for freedom and respect for human rights. However, those legitimate demands can be attained solely through a peaceful transition and dialogue, not violence and foreign intervention, which will lead only to more chaos, injustice and division, increasing the number of refugees and exacerbating related humanitarian consequences. Therefore, with regard to the Syrian crisis, Lebanon reaffirms its policy of disassociation at the political and the security levels in order to maintain its stability and balance of powers and in order to avoid unnecessary repercussions and risks.

Lebanon has not refrained from providing humanitarian support to the displaced Syrians in Lebanon, in an effort to alleviate their suffering. However, Lebanon alone cannot deal with the increasing number of displaced Syrians and their humanitarian needs. We have provided assistance, but the number of displaced persons has risen and exceeded our capacities. We can no longer absorb them on our own. More assistance by relevant international bodies is needed to help us in that regard.

The security repercussions of the Syrian crisis threaten civic peace and stability at the local level and in the Middle East. The international community must make greater efforts to reach a political solution between the parties in Syria, in order to put an end to the violence that is claiming hundreds of innocent lives every day.

As we support the freedom and legitimate rights of all people, we need to raise a crucial issue, namely, the right of the fraternal Palestinian people to return to their homeland and to establish an independent Palestinian State, with Jerusalem as its capital. The recognition of the Palestinian State and its acceptance as a full Member of this international Organization and its affiliated agencies should pave the way for a just political solution to the Palestinian question and correct the ongoing historical injustice that has been inflicted on the Palestinian people since 1948.

Lebanon is committed to maintaining stability and security in southern Lebanon, and we reaffirm our commitment to Security Council resolution 1701 (2006). However, the continuous Israeli violations of Lebanese sovereignty by air, land and sea — in excess of 9,000 violations since 2006 — are limiting the freedom of action of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and threatening the security of its members, once again violating international resolutions, specifically resolution 1701 (2006).

We appeal to the international community to pressure Israel to respect international resolutions and international law, to immediately withdraw from occupied North Ghajar, the Shaba'a farmlands and the Kfar Shouba hills, and to bring to an end the continuous threats to Lebanon's security. Lebanon values UNIFIL's role and its sacrifices, as well as its ongoing cooperation and coordination with the Lebanese army, and we express our gratitude to all participating and supporting countries.

Lebanon calls for the full implementation of resolution 66/192, of 22 December 2011, regarding the oil slick on its shores during the Israeli 2006 war on Lebanon, and demands compensation, in application of paragraph 4 of that resolution.

We reiterate our commitment to defend our exclusive economic area and our maritime borders as set by international law and in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which affirms our right to exploit our wealth and natural resources.

Lebanon, a vital crossroads of religions, beliefs, cultures and civilizations, is a country committed to divine and human values. We are fully aware that diversity and difference are an integral part of life in our region and throughout the world. We reiterate our commitment to freedom of expression, tolerance and dialogue. In the words of Pope John Paul II, Lebanon is not merely a country, it is a message. We consider prejudice towards all religions and prophets a clear aggression against the dignity, values and feelings of all believers, for it can only instigate conflict, violence and reactions that we condemn and could never accept. No one could accept them.

We therefore emphasize the importance and necessity of dialogue between civilizations and cultures. Building trust and fostering rules of conduct binding on all are essential to end once and for all the desecration of religious symbols, as well as to ensure respect for people's feelings and their freedom of belief. Such efforts can put an end to the extreme reactions and condemnable practices that we have unfortunately witnessed recently in certain countries. Respect for

religion does not restrict freedom of expression; rather, it is a rational practice of such freedom.

In that spirit, Lebanon has launched a national dialogue among the different Lebanese constituencies based on established national principles that were agreed on and developed under the Baabda Declaration (A/66/849, annex), which was welcomed by the Security Council. Dialogue is considered the best means for ensuring stability in Lebanon.

Lebanon is committed to peace and strives for its achievement, especially in the Middle East, a region we would like to be an oasis of peace, free of weapons of mass destruction. In that regard, we should remember that Israel is the only country in the region to possess nuclear weapons and that it continues to refuse to ratify the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, a position that constitutes an ongoing threat to peace and security in the region and the world at large.

We would like to emphasize once more the need for a peaceful and diplomatic resolution of the Iranian nuclear issue, while stressing countries' right to use nuclear power for peaceful purposes and avoiding double standards and selectivity, a problem that is faced by many regions in the world and by our region in particular. We also welcome ongoing international efforts to combat terrorism, the scourge of our time.

The peace we strive for is founded on what is right, not a fait accompli peace. The justice we strive for, especially in our region, is far removed from the selectivity and double standards that are, unfortunately, the case globally, especially in the Middle East. Our region is still suffering from the consequences of the establishment of the State of Israel, in 1948, and from its ongoing occupation of Arab territories in complete disregard for international law and United Nations resolutions.

Peace, freedom and justice are the pillars for attaining both security and stability. They will pave the way to the eradication of oppression, extremism, hegemony and terrorism in our world. Stability cannot exist without a Palestinian spring, and a Palestinian spring can occur only through the full implementation of the Palestinians' right to self-determination on their land.

The Arab world is witnessing one of the most critical periods of its modern history. We have reached a crossroads where societies must make choices that will translate their ambitions into reality. We therefore request the international community to draw up a serious economic, cultural and development road map to assist those countries in that newly reached breakthrough. Our young Arab societies are in need of enlightenment and development that can be achieved only by providing education and employment to put an end to ignorance and improve our living standards. That will also certainly contribute to fighting extremism.

We therefore suggest that countries step forward with their technical expertise while others offer financial assistance to draft a plan that could be implemented through the framework of a new institution to assist young men and women working in public administration to promote good governance, efficiency and productivity in governmental agencies. From that perspective, I propose to establish an institution in Beirut that will soon be able to offer an integrated programme on good governance.

As the Middle East is witnessing the most tumultous period of its history, we call on the international community to perceive Lebanon as the beacon of hope and message of freedom and pluralism that it is. Lebanon is not merely a small nation in need of shelter in a stormy region, and we are not asking for protection to ensure our own survival. We are, rather, calling on the Assembly to see us in the light of the role that we have repeatedly played. Despite all the difficulties we are facing, our country, which is small geographically but large in its global presence, has proved itself to be the epitome of a democratic, tolerant and pluralistic country among its neighbours.

It is therefore the duty of the international community to protect Lebanon, now and in the future, from the turbulence of the region and to help us so that we may thrive, flourish and shine our rays all over the Middle East. Only then will the United Nations provide our unstable region with a genuine source of inspiration, a viable, vibrant nation, an example and model of civil and religious liberties, social diversity and political freedom.

I call on all those here not to perceive Lebanon as a responsibility but as an opportunity, an opportunity to provide the safest and fastest path to all that the Middle East can be — democratic, peaceful and prosperous. Let us work to protect Lebanon from harm so we can

maintain peace in the Middle East and the world as a whole.

**The Acting President**: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Council of Ministers of the Lebanese Republic for the statement he has just made.

*Mr. Najib Mikati, President of the Council of Ministers of the Lebanese Republic, was escorted from the rostrum.*

**Address by Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh**

**The Acting President**: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

*Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, was escorted to the rostrum.*

**The Acting President**: I have great pleasure in welcoming Her Excellency Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, and inviting her to address the General Assembly.

**Sheikh Hasina** (Bangladesh) (*spoke in Bangla; English text provided by the delegation*): I warmly congratulate Mr. Jeremić on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session, and I thank Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser for his excellent leadership of the Assembly during the previous session. I also thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his efforts on behalf of the United Nations in the past year.

Our new world is experiencing popular uprisings, intra-State conflicts, climate change disasters, global financial crises, food and energy insecurity, human rights violations, terrorism and so forth. These and other experiences call for collective efforts towards peaceful resolution at the United Nations. I therefore commend the theme for this year's deliberations, namely, "Bringing about adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means".

In that context, I would like to recall the role of my father, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the Father of the Nation, who from this rostrum 38 years ago espoused the principles of friendship towards all and malice towards none, the peaceful settlement of disputes, the renunciation of the use of force in international relations, and contributing to global peace and security. In essence, his policy at home and abroad was based on justice and peace. At home, during my last tenure as Prime Minister, in 1997, those policy guidelines inspired me to settle a 20-year conflict that had cost more than 20,000 lives, through the signing of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord. In February 2009, during my current tenure, I was able to peacefully settle the volatile mutiny of our border guards, thus averting a dangerous crisis.

We have also put increased emphasis on improving external relations. I was able to resolve a 25-year-old issue with India on sharing the water of the River Ganges with the signing in 1996 of the 30-year Ganges Water Sharing Treaty. Last year the 2011 Protocol to our 1974 Land Boundary Agreement settled a border demarcation issue that had gone unresolved for 64 years. We also addressed mutual concerns about a dam proposed by India across a common river. With our other neighbour, Myanmar, we reached a peaceful settlement of a 41-year maritime boundary dispute through the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea.

Our national and international commitment to peace has also been demonstrated by our position among the top contributors to United Nations peacekeeping and as a founding member of the Peacebuilding Commission. As the current Chair of the Commission, on 25 September we held an event entitled "Peacebuilding: the way forward towards sustainable peace and security", in which many here participated. As a member of the Human Rights Council and of the Economic and Social Council, we promote justice, peace, democracy, gender equality, secularism, the rule of law and the rights of minorities and vulnerable groups. As a member of the executive bodies of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Office for Partnerships, UNESCO, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Maritime Organization and the Universal Postal Union, we advocate setting global norms and standards.

In my four decades in politics for the welfare of the people, I have learned that peace prevails when justice prevails, both within States and in relations between States. Only justice can ensure peace, which is so vital for development, and justice is possible only through democracy, which empowers people. The alternative — the absence of democracy — means social injustice, poverty, inequality, deprivation and

marginalization, which encourage extremism and terrorism. We are therefore strengthening democracy and justice by empowering people by eradicating poverty, hunger, inequality and deprivation and by establishing social safety nets, creating jobs, promoting inclusiveness, sustained growth and human development, and by countering terrorism.

The principles to which I have just referred also encouraged me to present a model for people's empowerment and development at the sixty-sixth session (see A/66/PV.22). The model encompasses six mutually reinforcing peace multipliers: first, eradicating poverty and hunger; secondly, reducing inequality; thirdly, mitigating deprivation; fourthly, including excluded persons; fifthly, accelerating human development; and sixthly, eliminating terrorism. That model was endorsed by the Assembly in resolution 66/224, adopted by consensus last year. In Dhaka, on 5 and 6 August 2012, we held an international conference to discuss the model, and the 62 participating countries supported its consideration at the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly. I highly appreciate their support. I also seek the Assembly's support for disseminating the model.

In our efforts to achieve people's empowerment, parliamentary standing committees were established during the first session of the Parliament that was constituted immediately after the general elections of 2008. There are 50 such committees, and many are chaired by members of Parliament from the opposition bench. We also introduced the Prime Minister's question time and strengthened commissions on anti-corruption, human rights and information. We ensured an independent, proactive judiciary, strengthened the rule of law and established human rights, accountability, secularism and rights of minorities. We proceeded with regional multimodal connectivity to empower all people. We modernized education in madrasas. We entrenched the election commission and democratic institutions for holding 5,182 elections in a completely free and credible atmosphere. We freed and expanded the media, with 24 private television channels, 7 news agencies, 11 FM and 14 community radio stations, 320 daily newspapers and 151 periodicals.

Since justice is the basis for empowering people for peace and development, women should have an equal role. To expedite the process of their empowerment, girls are provided free education up to higher secondary school under our new education policy. Women are also encouraged to be active in our national life. Women's leadership has been developed from the grass-roots level to the national level. Their participation in politics has been increased since the general elections in 2008. So far, 12,838 women have been elected to local Government bodies, and 69 women are members of the Parliament, constituting 20 per cent of the total number of members of Parliament. Besides my being the Prime Minister and Leader of the House, other women include the Opposition Leader, the Deputy Leader of the House, five Cabinet ministers and a Whip. Of general Government posts, 30 per cent are reserved for women, some of whom serve in very senior positions in the judicial, administrative and diplomatic fields, as well as in the armed and law enforcement services and as United Nations peacekeepers.

Our efforts to empower people in my present tenure have so far helped in reducing poverty by 10 per cent, attaining a gross domestic product growth rate of 6.5 per cent and enhancing per capita income by 34.6 per cent. They have helped to reduce overall inflation from double digits to 4.97 per cent, with food inflation declining from 13 per cent in 2008 to 2.25 per cent at present. Our efforts have assisted in the employment of 7.5 million in the private sector and half a million in the public sector. Exports have increased annually by 19 per cent over 2009 figures to $24.3 billion in 2011-2012. We have helped to arrange overseas jobs for 1.87 million nationals, increasing annual inward remittances by 10 per cent over 2009 to $12 billion in 2011-2012. We have maintained macroeconomic stability. We have expanded information and communications technology facilities among the lowest tier of local Government to ensure the availability of e-services to rural people. Nearly 100 per cent of school-age children are enrolled in in primary schools. We have achieved gender parity in primary and secondary education and have established 12,000 community clinics to ensure nutrition and health care for rural people, especially mothers and children. A climate change trust fund has been set up to implement adaptation and mitigation programmes. All those undertakings have helped in achieving Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 3, 4 and 5, on gender parity and infant and maternal mortality, ahead of 2015.

Our achievements have earned us global recognition through MDG, South-South and Food and Agriculture Organization awards. Importantly, the Secretary-General has acknowledged those achievements by

including me as a member of the Scaling Up Nutrition Lead Group and as a champion for the Education First initiative. We welcome his high-level panel on the post-2015 development agenda, which should consider coherence with the sustainable development goals and should prioritize poverty, hunger, nutrition, global food and energy security, climate change and global partnership for sustainable development.

I hope that the high-level panel will also consider formulating a position on the painful plight of autistic and disadvantaged children, who constitute about 1 per cent of the world's population. At home, we have put in place 55 special-needs schools and a centre for neurodevelopment and autism in children. In July 2011, with the collaboration of the World Health Organization and Autism Speaks, we launched a global autism public health initiative. At the current Assembly session we will submit a draft resolution on the autism spectrum disorder, which I hope will receive the Assembly's support.

Our efforts are hindered by unjust developments resulting from climate change, such as increasing poverty, property loss, human displacement and the consequent terrorism. The inevitable sea-level rise will create mass movements of displaced migrants. A new legal regime ensuring social, cultural and economic rehabilitation of climate migrants — which I called for at the Assembly's sixty-fourth session — must be put in place.

It was also emphasized at the Dhaka meeting in 2011 of the Climate Vulnerable Forum that an alliance of countries most vulnerable to climate change and rising sea levels has to be forged. As the current Chair of the Forum, Bangladesh launched the second edition of the Climate Vulnerability Monitor yesterday in New York. I also reiterate my call for an international agreement limiting greenhouse-gas emissions on the principle of common and differentiated responsibilities, on early operationalization of the Green Climate Fund for, inter alia, adaptation, mitigation and technology transfer.

Closely linked to climate change is global food and energy security. The increase of food and energy prices due to climate change can be very disturbing indeed. It has dangerous implications for least developed countries, which is why they need greater international support for socioeconomic security, for duty-free and quota-free access of their products to all markets, for the fulfilment of official development assistance commitments, for an equal voice in Bretton Woods institutions and other international financial institutions, and for free movement of labour to all countries. In fact, we should immediately implement Mode IV of the General Agreement on Trade in Services to benefit both sending and receiving countries.

We should also ensure documentation, safe migration and the protection of the rights of migrant workers, especially women and children, as a shared responsibility of sending and receiving States in the World Trade Organization.

The blatant injustice perpetrated against, and murder, torture and humiliation of the Palestinian people by Israel marks a shameful chapter in human history. Deep frustrations at the injustice in Palestine and in other places also fuel terrorism. It is vital to resolve the Palestine and similar burning questions through justice and the establishment of democratic rights.

In Bangladesh, from 2001 to 2006, an environment of terrorism prevailed. Under the patronage of the previous BNP-Jamaat Government, such internationally banned terrorist outfits as Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh, Harkatul Jihad, Hizb ut-Tahrir and Lashkar-e-Toiba, among others, carried out bomb and grenade attacks with impunity, every other day, to eliminate the secular and progressive parties. Prominent instances were the bomb attacks on four cinemas killing 19 people on 5 December 2002; the grenade attack on the British High Commissioner on 21 May 2004; bomb blasts at 500 places in 63 out of 64 districts within a span of half an hour on 17 August 2005; grenade and firearm attacks that killed former Finance Minister and Executive Director of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific Mr. S.A.M.S. Kibria, MP, Mr. Ahsanullah Master, MP, Mr. Mumtazuddin, MP, and two popular judges inside the court premises.

I was myself a target of a grenade attack at a public meeting on 21 August 2004, which left 24 people dead and nearly 500 injured. Somehow, I miraculously survived. Another heinous kind of terrorism that we experienced in Bangladesh was the brutal assassination of my father and the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, and 18 members of our family on 15 August 1975 by some misguided army personnel seeking to usurp State power. At that time, I was abroad with my sister, Sheikh Rehana, and thus escaped death. In view of our nation's tragic experiences with

terrorism, my Government has adopted a firm policy of zero tolerance of terrorism and all forms of extremism.

I conclude by joining the vast majority of United Nations Members in stressing once again the urgent need to reform the United Nations, the Bretton Woods Institutions and other international financial institutions. Their structures and decision making processes reflect a balance of power that is 60 years old, serving the interests of a privileged few and ignoring the large majority. The new millennium, with its large number of independent sovereign States and globalization, has ushered in a new world order. Today, we speak boldly of justice, equality, democracy, freedom, human rights, environment and the adverse impact of climate change, among other things. These are the priorities of our time, which we must acknowledge in place of the bitter experiences of the past. The new world order of nations has to be based on justice, mutual respect and sovereign equality if we are to evolve towards the world of peace and hope that we wish to leave to our future generations.

May Bangladesh live forever! Long live the United Nations!

**The Acting President**: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Bangladesh for the statement she has just made.

*Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, was escorted from the rostrum.*

*Mr. Roman-Morey (Peru), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

### Address by Ms. Yingluck Shinawatra, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Kingom of Thailand.

*Ms. Yingluck Shinawatra, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand, was escorted to the rostrum.*

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I have great pleasure in welcoming Her Excellency Ms. Yingluck Shinawatra, Prime Minister of Thailand, and inviting her to address the General Assembly.

**Ms. Shinawatra** (Thailand): On behalf of the delegation of the Kingdom of Thailand, allow me to congratulate the President of the General Assembly upon his election to preside over the Assembly at its sixty-seventh session.

I would also like to convey our appreciation to the outgoing President, Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, for his outstanding leadership of the General Assembly during the previous session.

We continue to live in challenging times. Much still needs to be done to restore stability and confidence in the global financial and economic system, and to find long-term solutions to the eurozone crisis. The Arab Spring has taught us that it is very important to listen to the voice of the people. The risk of conflict in various regions around the globe may affect our efforts to promote peace, prosperity and democracy.

We have also seen how religious insensitivity and hate can lead to violence. In the light of this, we need to promote a culture of tolerance, mutual respect and understanding, both in and among societies. These are essential factors to prevent conflict and promote lasting peace.

In our efforts to promote lasting peace and security, we are confronted with a wide range of threats, both old and new. It is therefore necessary for us to seek innovative solutions and new thinking. We need strong leadership, political will and good global governance. It is imperative that we settle international disputes by peaceful means. But even beyond that, we need to think in terms of preventive and preemptive actions to prevent such disputes from arising in the first place. Most important, we have to think in terms of promoting inclusive and comprehensive peace and development, both within and among countries. Peace, security and development are all interconnected.

Economic development must go hand in hand with political advancement. Here, I would like to emphasize three points. First, an inclusive national development strategy is vital. During this period of economic uncertainty, we must not consider economic growth alone. It is important to put people front and centre in the development agenda. Sustainable growth and development, job creation, promoting poverty reduction and equality and addressing climate change must go hand in hand. That is what every Government should do — put people at the heart of the country's economic development strategy — because we believe that the greatest asset of any country is the people, and how much a country can excel depends on how much its people can fully realize their potential.

Secondly, an inclusive regional development is the way forward and would help strengthen the fabric of regional peace and security. Thailand strongly believes that we and our neighbours in the region have a shared objective. We have a shared interest in fostering common peace and prosperity. We need to therefore strive to prosper together because only by working together can we create a much-needed synergy that would support our common development. That will also help limit the chance of conflict.

In South-East Asia, that is the spirit that drives the 10 States members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to establish an ASEAN Community by the year 2015. As ASEAN moves towards greater integration, great efforts are being made to close development gaps and expand connectivity across South-East Asia and beyond to the wider East Asia and South Asia. That would help spread development and growth more broadly across the continent. And as economic activities become more concentrated in East Asia, that closer integration and expanded connectivity, together with an expanding region-wide network of free trade agreements, will further strengthen the resilience of East Asia, create greater opportunities and unleash the full potential of this promising region.

Thirdly, an inclusive process at the global level is crucial as the international community considers the post-2015 development agenda. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have been an important tool that resulted in better livelihoods for millions of people. With 2015 fast approaching, the international community should mobilize an all-out effort to make the final push in realizing those MDGs.

At the same time, it is important to prepare beyond 2015. The successes and failures of the implementation of the MDGs should be taken into account as the international community starts to frame the post-2015 development agenda or the sustainable development goals. The process towards that end should be as inclusive as possible to ensure that the post-2015 development agenda will enjoy the broadest possible support and ownership of the international community. Thailand will play an active and constructive role in that process because development is an issue close to our heart.

In this age of globalization, the concept of absolute security has become obsolete. Peace can never be achieved in isolation. We can only seek peace through common security and stability. We must work closely with our friends in each region to strengthen their capacities in meeting their development goals. We believe that the peace and prosperity of our neighbours is that of our own. That is particularly relevant in the current case of Myanmar during the critical period of transition towards greater democracy, which Thailand fully supports. We must all work together as partners to help Myanmar continue in its process of change. We will all benefit from that economic cooperation and integration.

We live in a world of increasing interconnectivity, but our peoples continue to face insecurity from cross-border challenges. In this age of globalization, the concept of security must be people-centred. Therefore, transnational challenges — from people smuggling to human trafficking, from narcotics to pandemics, from natural disasters to illegal trade in arms and materials for weapons of mass destruction — must rank high on our national agenda. The international community should redouble its collective effort to act forcefully against transnational crimes that exist in a world of increased interconnectivity.

One of the worst forms of human indignity is human trafficking. I consider that inhumane form of exploitation to be a matter of national priority and am fully committed to eliminating it.. Whether it is human trafficking or other transnational crimes, the key is to ensure that the rule of law prevails and the basic rights of peoples are guaranteed. Vulnerable groups, such as women, children, the elderly and people with disabilities, in particular deserve our attention.

Solutions to those challenges cannot be achieved by Governments alone. We need to work with all stakeholders, especially in strengthening international norms and standards. Through the United Nations, we need to promote the rule of law as a solid foundation to achieve peace, international security, human rights and sustainable development.

We are committed to promoting peace and prosperity within countries and internationally, but, ultimately, the process must begin at home. It can best be accomplished by providing space for all within a democratic framework and promoting national reconciliation. Above all else, we must think in terms of partnership and work together as responsible members of the international community.

Working through the United Nations, we need to reach out to people who have been denied their legitimate rights and aspirations. It is in that spirit that the Royal Thai Government established diplomatic relations with the State of Palestine on 1 August 2012, in the hope that both Israel and Palestine can achieve true and lasting peace based on a two-State solution.

Elsewhere in the Middle East, the situation in Syria continues to worsen. Thailand is deeply concerned about the humanitarian impact of violence against civilians and strongly condemns such violence. We call for an immediate end to the use of force against civilians. We call for all sides to engage in dialogue towards a political solution, which can be achieved only by the efforts of the Syrian people themselves.

In the quest for peace and security, we believe it is necessary to continually look beyond our borders. Thailand wishes to reaffirm our commitment to peacekeeping in difficult times as necessary. From Timor-Leste to Haiti to Darfur and in the Gulf of Aden, Thailand's peacekeeping operations also assist in local and community development, sharing our best practices in agriculture, health and water resource management.

In sum, Thailand has continued to engage with the international community across all three pillars of the United Nations: peace and security, development and human rights. The management of those interconnected issues will provide us with long-term solutions, not only for conflict resolution via peaceful means, but also for ways to prevent conflicts from arising altogether.

I assure the Assembly that Thailand will continue to be a strong partner of the United Nations in helping to address those shared challenges of humankind. It is with that conviction that we have submitted our candidature as a non-permanent member of the Security Council for the term 2017-2018.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand for the statement she has just made.

*Ms. Yingluck Shinawatra, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand, was escorted from the rostrum.*

**Address by Mr. Gordon Darcy Lilo, Prime Minister of Solomon Islands**

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Solomon Islands.

*Mr. Gordon Darcy Lilo, Prime Minister of Solomon Islands, was escorted to the rostrum.*

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have great pleasure in welcoming Mr. Gordon Darcy Lilo, Prime Minister of Solomon Islands, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

**Mr. Lilo** (Solomon Islands): I wish to congratulate Mr. Vuk Jeremić on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. I also commend his predecessor, Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser of Qatar, for his fine leadership during the last session. In addition, I thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his tireless efforts in advancing security, development and human rights, the three pillars of the United Nations Charter.

Global security remains a serious challenge today. States are increasing their military capabilities and arms sales have tripled in the last year and are reaching record levels. Closer to home, in the Asia-Pacific region, new Cold War lines are being drawn and low-intensity territorial disputes are brewing. That situation provides the option of unilateral action, which undermines the rule of law at the international level. Those challenges now demand an effective multilateral institution that responds meaningfully in real time to uphold the rule of law. In that regard, Solomon Islands welcomes this year's theme on adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means. It is our desire that States that find themselves in international disputes adhere to the rule of law and work towards ensuring global peace.

Solomon Islands emerged from an internal conflict some 10 years ago. A regional peace initiative known as the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) has helped restore law and order and created an environment for nation-building and development. Our gratitude goes out to all our regional neighbours.

A national truth and reconciliation commission that was set up in 2009 to investigate the causes of the conflict

submitted its report early this year. The Commission has facilitated the national reconciliation and healing process, and the Government has established a working group to carefully consider the recommendations in the report.

Solomon Islands commends the General Assembly for convening the High-level Meeting on the Rule of Law at the National and International Levels this week. The rule of law is fundamental in guiding the conduct of actors and addressing the realities within national and international jurisdictions.

Since regaining peace and stability, Solomon Islands has achieved some social and economic progress. For example, economically, the country has enjoyed steady growth in the last five years. External reserves continue to improve and, as of February 2012, they stand at 10 months import cover. In addition, Solomon Islands is one of the 11 countries identified by the World Bank in 2012 as having most improved the ease of doing business in the country across several areas of regulation. An economic core working group has also been established to coordinate donor assistance and is playing an important role in public finance reforms, including debt management, and in creating fiscal buffers that enable us to cushion external shocks.

In the health sector, I am pleased to report that we have almost eradicated malaria from two of our nine provinces. Infant mortality has significantly decreased from 80 to 35 per 1,000 live births, and the maternal mortality rate has also decreased from 500 to 200 deaths per 100,000 live births. The Government and its development partners continue to fund medical and health centres to deliver the services needed by our people.

Major improvements in the law and order situation have resulted in the reduction of major crimes and created a safer environment in the country. We have also successfully hosted a number of international events, such as the Oceania football tournament of the International Federation of Association Football, the Festival of Pacific Arts and recently the visit by the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge. We have regained our image of the country known as the happy isles in the Pacific.

As part of our efforts to address governance issues, Solomon Islands has intensified its national consultations to determine the appropriate mechanisms to improve political integrity and stability. National consultations have been conducted to obtain feedback from the community on the required institutions and processes. Strengthening governance is expensive and needs international partnership. I take this opportunity to thank the Department of Political Affairs for its assistance towards our electoral reforms.

After almost 10 years, RAMSI is now in its transitional phase. The Government is working closely with the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands to ensure a smooth transition as the responsibility for security and development is placed back in the hands of the Government and community. My Government will engage with various stakeholders, including United Nations bodies, to consolidate the gains that have been made so far and in building a resilient State.

Solomon Islands continues to strengthen its relationship with the United Nations. This year we opened a second diplomatic Permanent Mission in Geneva. We are also pleased to see that the World Health Organization office in Honiara has been upgraded from a liaison office to the level of resident representative. We request the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to follow suit. I believe a stronger United Nations presence at the country level will further enhance understanding of the country's development priorities and challenges. The United Nations will only be strengthened with a secretariat that represents the diversity of its membership.

Solomon Islands recognizes the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Fiji.

We will continue to dialogue with Fiji and call on the region and the international community to support Fiji's "Engaging with the Pacific" process and its road map to the 2014 general elections. We welcome Fiji's commitment to hold its general elections in 2014.

Solomon Islands has also strengthened its mediating role at the subregional level through the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG). The MSG is made up of Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and the Front de libération nationale kanak socialiste. Within the MSG secretariat, a peacekeeping unit has been established. However, Solomon Islands and the other MSG members believe that the United Nations remains the bedrock of international peace and security.

The promotion of human rights is fundamental to creating a culture of peace and security. Solomon Islands welcomes the ongoing intergovernmental process to strengthen the effectiveness of human rights

treaty institutions during this session. We recognize the universality of human rights and call for the elimination of double standards and the politicization of human rights violations.

On the situation in the Middle East, I believe the United Nations is uniquely placed to provide a comprehensive solution to the region's complex issues, including the current situation in Syria. It is a region that deserves freedom, democracy and long-term security. Solomon Islands continues to support the work of the Quartet and the good offices of the Secretary-General in defusing tensions and advancing political discussion on a two-State solution for Israel and Palestine.

There is no justification for the killing of innocent civilians, wherever it may occur. We therefore join the international community in expressing our deep concern about the sad events in Benghazi.

With respect to Non-Self-Governing Territories in the Pacific, Solomon Islands supports New Caledonia's aspirations to self-determination. I wish to inform the Assembly that, last month, members of the MSG undertook a second ministerial visit to the territory to monitor progress under the Noumea Accord. We encourage all efforts to enable the Kanaks to assume leadership in determining their future. Solomon Islands also joins its regional neighbours in supporting the reinscription of French Polynesia in the list of countries to be decolonized. We also support other peoples within the Asia-Pacific region that aspire for self-determination and independence.

I welcome the work done by the General Assembly on strengthening the smooth transition process for countries graduating from the group of least developed countries. In working towards graduating from the group, we are embarking on a number of development initiatives. Under the Istanbul Programme of Action, Solomon Islands is pursuing three high-value national investments. First, with support from New Zealand, a second international airport is being constructed in the western part of our country. Secondly, the submarine fibre-optic cable project is expected to go on line by 2014. Thirdly, Solomon Islands is in the process of establishing two tertiary universities, the Solomon Islands National University and the University of South Pacific Solomon Islands Campus.

Those national projects place Solomon Islands on a path to transforming its economy and ensuring that inclusive and equitable economic growth takes root in the country. We have done this by unlocking domestic and regional resources through the establishment of a debt strategy in partnership with the private sector and the Asian Development Bank.

Furthermore, we are taking steps to maximize returns from our natural resources. As a party to the Nauru Agreement, we have closed off pockets of high seas between our exclusive economic zones in a bid to protect and manage fish stocks. In that regard, we have adopted the Vessel Day Scheme to guarantee an equitable share of benefits. We hold the position that the Scheme must be embodied in bilateral and multilateral fisheries agreements. We call on all distant-water fishing nations to respect that principled position.

In the mining sector, we are now a member of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, and we continue to develop policy and translate it into local laws and regulations. Mining presents a major opportunity to broaden our economic base. In that regard, we will be granting mining leases to a major nickel-mining company before the end of the year. It is estimated that the company will produce around 69,000 tons per year and generate significant job opportunities.

At the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), we charted a new course to develop an improved paradigm for advancing and measuring the three pillars of sustainable development. The full and timely implementation of the Rio+20 outcome (resolution 66/288, annex) is crucial. As we approach 2015, we must accelerate efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goal targets in the remaining three years.

Solomon Islands is implementing its national development strategy for the period 2011-2020. We call on our development partners to align their assistance with the priorities that are contained in our national development strategy. The proposed post-2015 development agenda must take into account any shortcomings in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, and the sustainable development goals must be viable economically, community-based and time-bound. We look forward to working with the experts who will be establishing the framework. Solomon Islands is pleased to be one of the 50 countries that UNDP will consult in developing the post-2015 global development agenda. We request that this consultation process also mainstream issues of concern to small island developing States into the agenda

of the 2014 Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

I join my colleagues in the Alliance of Small Island States in reiterating that climate change is an urgent and irreversible threat to humanity. Solomon Islands is deeply troubled by the current low ambition level of the pledges by developed countries. There is a discrepancy between what has been pledged and what is necessary to stabilize temperature decrease. That means mitigation must be prioritized at the eighteenth ordinary meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Doha and greenhouse-gas emission levels meaningfully decreased. We need to have certainty that we are working towards a temperature increase of no more than 1.5 degrees Celsius, and not 3 to 5 degrees Celsius, in order to ensure the survival, viability and sustainable development of small island developing States and least developed countries.

We deeply regret that some countries have opted out of the Kyoto Protocol, some have refused to take a second commitment and others have remained undecided on taking a second commitment.

However, at the national level I am pleased to announce that, in June, Solomon Islands launched its national climate change policy, which mainstreams climate change into all sectors of the country. Solomon Islands is a country with rich biological and cultural diversity. It is a member of the Coral Triangle Initiative on coral reefs, fisheries and food security. This year, 22 Pacific Island countries and territories came together in Solomon Islands to showcase their cultural diversity and heritage. The region has indigenous biological and cultural diversity, which makes it an indigenous and biocultural hot spot. That hot spot remains fragile and exposed to threats and needs international support. We will be seeking ways and means of having that initiative featured on the global agenda.

The reform of the Security Council must keep pace with the changing global realities. We support the call to make the Security Council more representative, relevant and effective. After four sessions, we are concerned about the slow progress of negotiations and hope to see progress during this session.

My Government recognizes Taiwan's flexible, moderate and rational foreign policy, which continues to promote friendly cross-Strait relations. Solomon Islands continues to support Taiwan's meaningful participation in the United Nations system, including its aspiration to be a member of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Although not a member of ICAO, Taiwan manages more than 1 million flights and 40 million passengers per annum. Similarly, Taiwan is the twenty-second-largest emitter of greenhouse gas, but it is not a member of UNFCCC. I firmly believe that it is our shared responsibility to engage Taiwan in our efforts to advance sustainable development and address climate change.

With regard to Cuba, I thank the Government and people of Cuba for the support they have provided to the medical students of Solomon Islands. We join the international community in calling for the immediate lifting of the United States economic and trade embargo against Cuba. Solomon Islands encourages the United States to respect the principle of good-neighbourliness.

Finally, with regard to gender equality and the empowerment of women, I would like to thank Member States for their confidence in electing Solomon Islands to the Executive Board of UN-Women. I also welcome the call by the Secretary-General to convene the World Conference on Women in 2015. Solomon Islands further acknowledges the $320 million in regional assistance from Australia to support gender programmes for Pacific island countries. Women play a very important role as peacemakers and leaders in Solomon Islands society. Our gender challenge has grown with time. Today we have national gender programmes that support empowerment. We look forward to working closely with Australia and the other Board members in advancing the cause of women and girls.

Solomon Islands is committed to working closely with the President in establishing an inclusive, transparent and effective multilateral system. I would also like to assure him of our support for our common endeavour to build a peaceful and secure world for our children and future generations.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Solomon Islands for the statement he has just made.

*Mr. Gordon Darcy Lilo, Prime Minister of Solomon Islands, was escorted from the rostrum.*

**Address by Mr. Asylbek Jeenbekov, Speaker of the Parliament of the Kyrgyz Republic**

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Speaker of the Parliament of the Kyrgyz Republic.

*Mr. Asylbek Jeenbekov, Speaker of the Parliament of the Kyrgyz Republic, was escorted to the rostrum.*

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Asylbek Jeenbekov, Speaker of the Parliament of the Kyrgyz Republic, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

**Mr. Jeenbekov** (Kyrgyzstan) (*spoke in Russian*): First of all, let me congratulate His Excellency Mr. Vuk Jeremić on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session, I wish him every success in carrying out his important functions. It is also a great pleasure to express my gratitude to His Excellency Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser for his successful, fruitful leadership of the work of the Assembly's previous session.

It would be difficult to say that the overall situation in the world has improved. We have not yet fully recovered from one of the most serious global economic crises in the past 65 years. Yes, the overall economic situation is gradually normalizing. Proof of that is the improving forecasts for world economic growth by key international organizations for this year. However, we should point out that risks remain and that the recovery process is still very uncertain.

It is unfortunate that the world has not become any safer. We are seeing a rise in confrontations and tension in various parts of the world. Global climate change, population growth against the background of a deteriorating environment, the scarcity of natural resources and of access to drinking water, and many other problems are in the aggregate stoking tensions and the potential for conflict in areas of cooperation on the international arena.

Traditional ways of life are changing fast under the impact of globalization processes. States are finding it increasingly hard to tackle modern challenges by themselves because of the transborder nature of those challenges. Terrorism, separatism, extremism, drugs, information wars — these are a kind of tumour for humankind and cannot be eradicated at the local level alone.

Sadly, there are forces at work in the world that wish to drag humankind to the brink of the precipice, to kindle the flames of hostility wherever they go. One glaring example is the video *Innocence of Muslims*, which symbolically appeared on the eve of the General Assembly session. Kyrgyzstan condemns the provocative nature of its content. It is unacceptable to insult anyone's religious sensibilities, regardless of their faith. Humanism, tolerance and mutual respect make the world better and safer. Therefore, we also reject the use of force against diplomats — envoys of peace and a symbol of cooperation — of any country.

Humankind is developing and changing fast. Regional, and even local, events can impact on global processes. In 2011, we observed with sympathy and solidarity the events in the Middle East and North Africa. The situation in Syria that we have seen this year can only be a cause of serious concern for the international community. All attempts to resolve the military conflict and restore stability to that county have, sadly, failed. With regard to the thousands of civilian victims, the Kyrgyz Republic strongly advocates a speedy end to the violence in that country, the opening of a broad national dialogue between the political forces and a continuation of political and socioeconomic reform and participation of all Syrian citizens.

The Afghan factor continues to be a source of threat to international security. There are concerns that a full, swift drawdown of coalition forces could open the way for destructive forces and the emergence of various extremist and terrorist groups in neighbouring countries. Every stakeholder in the world can make a contribution to the issue of security by reviving Afghanistan's economy and developing trade, economic, cultural and humanitarian ties with the country, as well as its communication infrastructure.

Since 2001 Kyrgyzstan has played its part in that process, rendering assistance to the counter-terrorist coalition in Afghanistan through the cargo Transit Center at Manas International Airport. It is clear that the counter-terrorist coalition, with the withdrawal of the military contingent from Afghanistan, must bring its mission to a logical conclusion to create the foundation of a national administrative system for that country so that all branches of power can be fully functional throughout the territory of Afghanistan.

We must do our utmost for the economic rehabilitation of Afghanistan by engaging it in the

development of regional cooperation and implementing joint socioeconomic projects between international organizations and financial institutions. In that regard, Kyrgyzstan is ready to expand trade and economic ties to export electricity to Afghanistan as part of the CASA-1000 project, with the support of donor countries and the international financial institutions.

The peaceful development of Afghanistan is impossible without eradicating the systemic, ubiquitous cultivation of opium in that country. For many years Afghanistan has been the biggest producer and exporter of drugs. The growing penetration of that deadly crop is harming the countries of Central Asia. Not only are they on the northern transit route towards the countries of Europe and Asia, they are also progressively becoming consumers.

Drugs are the enemy of civilized humankind. Where there are drugs, there are international organized crime groups and transborder challenges. Easy money earned at the cost of people's lives has no productive basis. It brings destruction and the degradation of human value. Drugs also spawn corruption and erode State systems from the inside. Criminal proceeds are used to bribe law enforcement bodies and the judiciary. They fund corrupt politicians who seek power. The international community must provide technical, economic and other support to Afghanistan's neighbours, including the Central Asian countries, to build an effective shield to neutralize and localize drug trafficking from Afghanistan.

We believe that the mission of the United Nations, as the single universal multilateral Organization, is to be on the front line in tackling all modern challenges and issues.

We should recognize that the global prevention architecture, the international and regional security system of today, does not reflect the requirements of our time. It is unfortunate that despite the search for universal methods for mediation and peaceful conflict resolution, the international community still has not resolved those issues.

The need to reform the United Nations architecture and adapt it to the realities of the modern international situation has not abated. A top priority is the reform of principal organs of the United Nations, namely, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council. We should point out that the tasks of those structures, in the light of the current international situation, require serious transformation and integration of fundamentally new approaches.

In terms of the reform of the United Nations, we propose the expansion of the membership of the Security Council to make it more representative, transparent and democratic. The reform should be based on principles of universality, efficiency and broad geographic representation, particularly for those countries that have not yet had the chance to take part in its work as non-permanent members.

At the same time, we need to strengthen the coordinating role of the Economic and Social Council as a global governance mechanism on issues of sustainable development, food security, humanitarian assistance, environmental cooperation and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by the 2015 deadline.

The current global situation dictates the need to consolidate the efforts of all countries to develop tangible action based on objective, fair reflection of their interests and needs. On that basis, the Kyrgyz Republic has submitted its candidature for the Economic and Social Council for the period 2013-2015. If elected by Member States to that organ with such enormous potential, the Kyrgyz Republic intends to play its part in tackling problems on the global agenda.

The problems of sustainable development and global climate change have presented serious challenges in recent years, and the attention of the international community must not slacken. In supporting the global discussions on a green economy model that took place at the Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development, Kyrgyzstan chose its future path towards long-term sustainable green development and an environment-minded economy. We would like to confirm our commitment to developing our economy through complying with requirements to protect our environment and with a safe approach to national resources, which are a national asset.

At Rio+20, the importance of development issues concerning mountainous areas was acknowledged with regard to managing global natural resources, as was the need for support for the sustainable development of mountain regions in developing countries. It should be noted that despite the assistance of the international financial institutions, developing mountain States continue to suffer difficulties. High levels of poverty and isolation, increasing transport costs and large

foreign debts comprise the main problems facing mountain countries. In that situation, it will be difficult to achieve the MDGs and attain the status set out in the United Nations documents on sustainable development.

In that respect, I wish to call attention to the importance of the launching of international discussions on the question of exchanging Kyrgyzstan's foreign debt for sustainable development projects. We call on the United Nations and its entities to render support on that matter.

By the will of God, we gained independence 21 years ago. Previous leaders were unable to cope with the task of building a truly independent Kyrgyzstan. They could not build an effective, transparent State system for governing that would work for the benefit of the people. Most of the important issues were tackled behind closed doors, without informing society. For the sake of personal enrichment and gain, some State decisions were even taken to the detriment of national interests.

The former Kyrgyz leaders declared a course for democracy that in fact did not take place. The former regimes established a clan-like system of governance that flouted the principles of a free society and usurped power. They not only attempted to hand power down to their children, but brought the people to their knees merely for the sake of their personal enrichment. The freedom-loving people of Kyrgyzstan therefore carried out two revolutions, in 2005 and 2010, in response to the unjust, tyrannical and authoritarian power.

The latest choice has proved a difficult one for our people, despite our commitment to democratic values, which is almost hard-wired in the Kyrgyz people, part of their very heritage. Over 100 glorious sons of our country laid down their lives for democracy during the April revolution of 2010. Their memory lives on. Also, 1,500 people were injured.

Over the past two years, our country has begun to implement new, democratic governance. The Kyrgyz people have chosen a parliamentary, presidential form of governance. We believe that was a just decision. According to impartial observers, our country has made significant progress during the past year in terms of building a democratic State.

We began under difficult conditions. In the years of independence in Kyrgyzstan, industry virtually ground to a halt. No new jobs were created. Labour migration grew. One third of the working population was forced to find employment abroad. We were left with ineffective public administration institutions, low per-capita income, a reduced budget, rampant corruption and organized crime, as well as unhampered drug-trafficking from Afghanistan to the north, east and west.

Currently, we are waging an uncompromising struggle against the corruption that is wearing away the State system from within. Civil servants who are found to be involved in corruption are being prosecuted under the law. In modern Kyrgyzstan, there will be no caste of those whom the law does not touch.

The battle against corruption is already seeing tangible results. Senior State officials under investigation have been arrested, including members of Parliament, ministers, their deputies and others. Leaders of organized crime groups are either in prison or on the run outside of the country.

We are determined to extradite for prosecution those people for whom international warrants have been issued. In the name of fairness, the former leaders of Kyrgyzstan, who have taken shelter in neighbouring countries along with their inner circle, must be sanctioned in strict compliance with Kyrgyz legislation. Kyrgyzstan stresses that they are being prosecuted not for politically motivated acts, but for specific crimes punishable by law. They gave the orders to open fire on peaceful civilians and to destroy innocent people. They pillaged their own people and the country's budget and took enormous financial assets out of the country. They have used criminal gains to buy villas, land and other costly material goods. In such issues, punishment must be just and inevitable so as to deter future leaders from repeating such actions.

Therefore, we still hope that the Byelorussian authorities, partners of ours in the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Eurasian Economic Union and who have assumed responsibilities under the Minsk and Kishinev Conventions, will show their commitment to their international legal obligations and extradite the relatives and the retinue of the former President of Kyrgyzstan, Kurmanbek Bakiyev, who have been hiding in their territory and even have Byelorussian passports. The United Nations needs to establish clear standards and procedures to ensure justice at the international level, and especially for the return of illegally gained assets.

Kyrgyzstan is steadfastly building a parliamentary democracy, a direct authority that represents the people, their wishes and their needs. At present, there are processes in place that are gradually bringing our society to a healthy state. Today, Parliament is engaged in political processes. Gradually, polemics and arguments are transitioning from street democracy to a civilized form for resolving any significant controversial issues within the walls of Parliament. Under the national Constitution, the Kyrgyz Parliament is the highest representative body, carrying out the functions of legislative authority and control. The Government is fully accountable to the Parliament.

A major test, and at the same time an indicator, is the fact that since the adoption of the new Constitution in 2011, we have seen the peaceful launch of all institutions of authority in accordance with the letter of the law. The members of Parliament have been elected. At the end of 2011 we saw, for the first time in Kyrgyzstan's history, a peaceful transfer of power from the President to the newly elected Head of State, Almazbek Atambayev. A functioning coalition Government is in place.

We are reforming the judicial system, which must be equitable and fully independent. Despite strong opposition from certain quarters who are not interested in seeing the successful conclusion of that issue, we have, in the space of two years, launched a new, transparent mechanism for the selection of judges. In mid-September, the Parliament approved the 25 judges of the Supreme Court. The selection of judges to the Constitutional Court and local courts is also under way.

The establishment of an independent judiciary is extremely important for us. It will allow us to achieve a just public administration in which every citizen will be equal before the law. We are working effectively with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and other agencies on the legal system and on improving legislation to ensure everyone's equality before the law.

With the participation of the Parliament, the country has undertaken planning and reforms in all spheres of the State system — in the justice system, law enforcement, taxation, oversight and others. All of that requires stronger legislation. Kyrgyzstan is taking its first steps in the new format of a parliamentary republic. Sustainable development depends on the level of governance, on the rule of law and on human rights. We believe in the bright future of our country and that very soon all our countrymen will be able to say with pride that they are the citizens of a strong, prosperous Kyrgyzstan.

(*spoke in Kyrgyz; interpretation provided by the delegation*)

One can more clearly see the sanctity of our fatherland and our true values of independence from afar.

I would like to appeal to my countrymen from the highest podium in the world. Twenty years ago, God granted us the independence that our ancestors had dreamed of for centuries, for which they had shed their blood and sacrificed their lives. The freedom that was sent down to our people as a blessing should be strengthened without division, by tireless effort and labour united in harmony. Regardless of provocation by two-faced forces, we need to continue to strengthen the path on which we set forth. Let us build a strong, united beloved Kyrgyzstan. To reach a bright future we need to continue to move forward. Life is a struggle between light and dark, good and bad. We need unity. We need work and welfare, not animosity and discord. May the Creator bless our nation as it moves towards bright goals.

(*spoke in Russian*)

Unfortunately, our country is still weak and economically dependent. We are not free in the choice of our foreign sources of energy, but that problem is gradually being tackled with the assistance of our strategic partners. Kyrgyzstan needs the help of the international community to tackle the problem of our foreign debt, which is hampering the process of economic growth of the State and the implementation of fundamental reforms.

We fully share what Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said here in his opening statement at the Assembly's sixty-seventh session, namely, that developing States need support (see A/67/PV.1). We believe that developing democracies in particular need support from countries of the democratic club and from economically developed States. To consolidate parliamentary democracy, Kyrgyzstan vitally needs the support of our principal partners for the complex reforms undertaken in restructuring or in writing off of Kyrgyzstan's State debt. I wish to stress that we have a clear vision of how to conduct reforms and how to achieve development of the State. However, in the light of the high deficit, we need significant additional resources, which we will certainly return once we have

achieved development and prosperity in the country in the coming years.

We are open to mutually beneficial, trusting partnerships and cooperation with all States. Kyrgyzstan has great economic potential. We are an open country, willing to engage in mutual dialogue. We have great industrial and metallurgical potential. In Kyrgyzstan you can find most of the elements on Mendeleev's table of elements.

Critically important for many energy projects, we have a highly qualified labour force and cheap electricity. In the modern world, energy is the driver of progress. Kyrgyzstan has huge hydroelectric potential, which we have begun to exploit. Every year we develop around 14 billion kilowatts per hour of electricity, which is not enough to satisfy the hydro-energy demand of Kyrgyzstan, which is around 142.5 billion kilowatts per hour.

On 20 September, Kyrgyzstan and Russia concluded an agreement that is vital for the entire Central Asian region on building and operationalizing the Kambar-Ata and the Naryn Cascade power plants. Participation in building one of the biggest hydroelectric projects in Central Asia will include our neighbours in the region and allow Kyrgyzstan not only to increase the development of cost-effective, environmentally clean electricity but also to preserve the water in the foothills that is currently supplying our neighbours during the growing season. The benefit of the effective implementation of such projects is clear. It will enhance our hydroelectric export potential and protect drinking water for our neighbours. We invite all investors to take part in building those projects.

To conclude, I would like to note that the international community is undergoing a difficult period. Political and social upheavals are creating numerous obstacles on the path to human development. We are seeing a new era for the world order, combined with new historical challenges and changes. At this critical stage the Organization must continue its lofty mission to build peace and to achieve sustainable development throughout the world. Kyrgyzstan, in the spirit of solidarity and cooperation with the United Nations, is prepared to play its part in tackling the major challenges of this day.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Speaker of the Parliament of the Kyrgyz Republic for the statement he has just made.

*Mr. Asylbek Jeenbekov, Speaker of the Parliament of the Kyrgyz Republic, was escorted from the rostrum*

## Address by Mr. Abdiweli Mohamed Ali, Prime Minister of the Transitional Federal Government of the Somali Republic

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Transitional Federal Government of the Somali Republic.

*Mr. Abdiweli Mohamed Ali, Prime Minister of the Transitional Federal Government of the Somali Republic, was escorted to the rostrum.*

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Abdiweli Mohamed Ali, Prime Minister of the Transitional Federal Government of the Somali Republic, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

**Mr. Ali** (Somalia): I would like to congratulate Mr. Jeremić on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session and to commend Ambassador Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser for the manner in which he guided the proceedings of the Assembly last year.

Just over two weeks ago, Somalia took a bold and decisive step away from decades of division, disorder and conflict, and instead towards the reconstitution of a more representative, more democratic Somali Republic, at peace with itself, with its neighbours and with the rest of the world. On 1 August this year, a National Constituent Assembly adopted the new Somali Constitution and on 20 August a new Parliament was sworn in, which elected our new President, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, on 10 September. In the coming weeks, the President will appoint a Prime Minister and a new cabinet will be duly established.

Let me take this opportunity to convey the sincere regrets of President Mohamud. He would have liked to be here himself to address the Assembly on this great occasion. However, the tremendous scale and urgency of the challenges facing him as leader of Somalia and the demands of his new role did not permit him to travel here to New York to present his remarks in person. He

asked me to come here to convey his warm greetings and his vision for Somalia's future.

For more than two decades of crisis, the Somali people have suffered and endured, but we have not done so alone. The United Nations has stood by us, providing humanitarian assistance to those of our people in need, helping us to rebuild from the ruins of war, bringing us time and again to the negotiating table to resolve our differences and maintaining the dignity of the Somali nation by keeping our flag flying throughout these long, dark years. As we emerge from the long, dark days, I wish to express my personal thanks, and those of the Somali people, to the Secretary-General and his Special Representative, Augustine Mahiga, for their tireless support and crucial role in helping to open this new chapter in Somali history.

Somalia's progress is also due in great measure to the selfless courage and sacrifice of our brothers and sisters in the African Union, including our closest neighbours, whose forces have fought long and hard, with so many laying down their lives in the battle to give our children a better future. With the support of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and other partners, our armed forces are becoming increasingly experienced and capable, but we will need AMISOM's steadfast presence and mentoring for some time to come, and we call upon our brothers in the African Union to renew their commitment as we move forward to assume our own responsibilities in full. We thank our international partners who are diligently supporting AMISOM, especially the European Union and the United States, among others.

The members of the League of Arab States and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation have also extended the hand of friendship to the Somali people during these difficult times. We are especially grateful to the Government and people of Turkey for their faith, courage and leadership in ending our long isolation and building bridges between Somalia and the rest of the world.

But now, with all these partners standing by us we must increasingly learn to travel our own path with our own energies, developing the ability to stand on our own feet and step free from reliance on our kind friends. Already, the Somali diaspora from around the world are returning to the country with investment and skills that will build the future Somalia. We can also learn from how peace and growing prosperity have developed in other parts of the country. We must build on the return of normality in Mogadishu, and elsewhere in Somalia, and on the growing public confidence in the future. It is the Somali people in the villages and the nomadic pastoralists, with their resilience, drive and dynamism, who are best placed to lend real stability to Somalia's future.

The end of Somalia's transition was brought about by the tremendous joint efforts of the Transitional Federal Government, Somali regional administrations, civil society and our traditional elders. Against all odds, within one year Somalis were able to adopt a new provisional Constitution, create a new Parliament and elect a new President, heralding the beginning of a new era. This one-year experience has shown several things. When we put our minds to it, we Somalis are capable of overcoming tremendous obstacles and delivering on expectations. It has shown that we can effect our political transitions within our own country. It has shown that Somalis are indeed ready for a new chapter and are calling for a permanent Government that can build on the foundations of this remarkable year.

Somalia's transition has officially ended, but the work of rebuilding our nation continues. The new administration has four short years to translate agreements and objectives made on paper into concrete, tangible progress for our people, and to place Somalia firmly on an irreversible path to enduring peace and growing prosperity.

The most urgent challenge is to restore peace and security throughout Somali territory. Our forces, together with our African Union allies, are making great progress in that regard. But a stable peace cannot be achieved through military means alone. We must practise the politics of inclusion, establishing a credible, representative, inclusive and capable Government — a Government by the people, for the people, not a Government of the few, serving the interests of the few. Initially, that Government must be about delivering real governance and connections with the people. It must be about the process of building local representation, addressing community justice and seeking to build basic services, rather than about distant institutions of Government from Mogadishu, or even provincial centres. Power and responsibility must be devolved as close to the people as possible, in accordance with the principles of federalism. It will be important to recognize the existence of other Somali authorities, as well as de facto political and military

forces across the country, with which we will work to establish a vibrant, prosperous and stable representative Government democracy, firmly adhering to and grounded in Somali and Islamic values.

We will also require a fair and independent judiciary, one resistant to executive interference, and one that will meet the needs and earn the trust of ordinary citizens, while bringing an end to the culture of impunity that has gripped our nation for the past two decades.

We have repeatedly extended an olive branch to the Government's adversaries, and, although this has been repeatedly rejected, our new President will continue to reach out and offer peace. Al-Shabaab is a complex and heterogeneous movement. Most of its members are ordinary citizens who have aligned themselves with Al-Shabaab out of fear or a sense of grievance. At the same time we must also be honest with ourselves and admit that some of the members come from a nationalist, conservative faction of our fractured country, which has been disillusioned and damaged by decades of conflict, and they have sought refuge in an extreme and harsh source of justice and security. To them we must prove that there is a better way. To them we have always said and will continue to say, "Brothers and sisters, lay down your arms and let us talk".

We Somalis have a saying — after every war comes peace. So let us remember that we have no choice as a nation but to live together. Let us settle our differences through dialogue and compromise, so that there is no longer any justification for any Somali to take up arms against another. To those few ideological extremists in Al-Shabaab's ranks who remain committed to the use of terror and the murder of innocents to achieve their aims, we say, "There is no place in Somali society, nor in international society, for you and your violent creed. We will fight you until Somalia is once again a nation founded on the peace, tolerance and management that constitute the true spirit of the great religion of Islam".

As we focus our energies on these immediate challenges, we must nevertheless keep our longer-term goals clearly in view. The new Government understands clearly that its purpose is not to entrench itself indefinitely in power, but to lay the foundation for a democratic system of governance, anchored in Islamic values and based on universal, competitive elections, by August 2016.

The new Government has just four short years within which to establish the states and regions of this federation, and to do so in a way that unifies our people rather than dividing them. We must validate the new Constitution through consultation and referendum, and establish systems of governance that serve the interests of the Somali people. We must design representative electoral systems that serve to heal the divisions of our society rather than to aggravate them.

As we move away from transitional Government into the era of permanent Government, we must establish a new compact for national coexistence in which the aspirations of all Somalis, not only some, are reflected. We recognize that the bonds of love and solidarity that bound us together in 1960 have been heavily damaged and sorely tested. The talks initiated earlier this year between the Transitional Federal Government and the Somaliland administration have begun well, and we intend to continue them. We will not use military or political coercion to bring out an artificial unity; we want a genuine unity that results from negotiations, mutual respect and mutual agreement.

The durability of our stabilization efforts will depend in large part upon our ability to revive and develop the Somali economy. Security and durable peace cannot exist without jobs and food, and therefore we must work hard to ensure that food is on the table of the average Somali family, to create job opportunities and to enable Somalis to work for themselves.

Our country is abundant in resources; we have the longest coastline in Africa, 9 million acres of fertile land, the highest per capita number of livestock in the world. We have oil and minerals. We are strategically located at the gateway of the Middle East and Africa, at the confluence of the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea. Our challenge as Somalis is to use those resources to bring our country and our people back onto the global economic playing field.

On the topic of resources, we are committed to strengthening the Government's financial accountability. Somalia is a poor country, and we cannot afford corruption. We seek the assistance of our international partners in establishing and strengthening transparent systems of public financial management.

The problems of Somalia have spilled far beyond our borders. Foreign countries have taken in hundreds of thousands of Somalis fleeing the crisis in our country, at considerable sacrifice to their own citizens; Somali pirates have become the scourge of shipping far from our shores. Extremists from across the world have used

our territory as a base from which to plan and launch attacks against foreign countries.

As Somalia reclaims its status as a full member of the international community, we must acknowledge our responsibility as a nation, both for the proliferation of these problems and for their eventual resolution. We recognize the urgency of tackling these threats to international security, but we are also conscious of their complexity and of the fact that lasting solutions can be achieved only through reflection, consultation, the force of law and only, as a last resort, the judicious use of force. We intend to engage with our international partners on all of these fronts, as we strengthen our internal capacity to address these challenges.

The road ahead is long, but we, the Somali people, are committed, and we are ready. We have created the guideposts, and we have chosen a new leadership to help us move forward. We are grateful for the support of the world community; we would not be here today without its moral, political and financial support. Most dear to us is the personal sacrifice made by our African brothers and sisters who came in person to help us protect our country and people. We cannot thank them enough, and we hope one day to be able to repay them.

As many today have noted, the United Nations was founded on the conviction that the nations of the world could come together in the spirit of cooperation to tackle their common problems for the sake of the whole of humanity.

The world is going through a challenging period — economic crises, religious tensions and resource disputes. Every nation has its own challenges and priorities. And yet we come together as the United Nations to forge a common way forward, because we recognize that this small Earth is all the space we have, and we must find a way to share it and coexist peacefully.

As Somalis, we have learned this hard lesson through bitter experience, and we are living through it every day, each time another young man chooses to take his own life and the lives of others; each time a young mother has to bury a child. Let us not forget that in rebuilding a nation, or in steering the world to a better place, we are dealing with the lives of human beings, each life as precious as the next. For the future of our children, we must work harder to make our world peaceful and prosperous.

In that context, on behalf of the Somali people, I want to convey our condolences to the United States and Algeria on the recent violent loss of their senior diplomats. Diplomacy is a peaceful calling and the foundation of the United Nations, and we must protect diplomats for their important role in promoting dialogue and better understanding across countries and cultures.

The members of the Assembly are not strangers to conflict and war. Many countries have experienced violence and destruction equal to or greater than my own. But few other countries in modern times have experienced such a prolonged period of statelessness: a nation without a recognized Government, a valid passport or a convertible currency.

But it is not just the material attributes of statehood that we have missed. To be stateless in this world of States is injurious to a people's identity, to its rights and privileges as a nation, and to its dignity. It is time for us to reclaim Somalia's rightful place in the community of nations, to shoulder our duties and obligations, and to place our country in the service of peace, security and prosperity on this planet we share.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Transitional Federal Government of the Somali Republic for the statement he has just made.

*Mr. Abdiweli Mohamed Ali, Prime Minister of the Transitional Federal Government of the Somali Republic, was escorted from the rostrum.*

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Rashid Meredov, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan.

**Mr. Meredov** (Turkmenistan) (*spoke in Russian*): I wish at the outset to express my sincere gratitude for being given the honour of speaking from this lofty rostrum.

Allow me first of all to convey to the members of the Assembly and to the peoples of their countries the greetings and wishes for peace and prosperity of His Excellency the President of Turkmenistan, Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov.

Allow me to congratulate His Excellency Vuk Jeremić on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session and to wish him every success in his upcoming critical work. I would also like to express appreciation to His Excellency

Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, President of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session, for the skilful and effective manner in which he carried out his duties.

Today the international community is witness to complex, multifaceted processes in geopolitics, the global economy and the humanitarian sphere. Serious environmental problems challenge us with their unprecedented urgency. It is no exaggeration to say that major global issues related to energy supplies acquiring universal importance. All of these require a constructive and effective response on the part of the United Nations and the elaboration of appropriate international mechanisms aimed at maximizing the effective use of existing political, financial, organizational and other resources, so as to overcome existing problems and challenges, enhance mutual understanding and trust, and reaffirm the irreversibility of the process of sustainable development of all the peoples of our planet.

Objectively speaking, energy security is fundamental to the stable and conflict-free development of today's world. As a leading energy provider with the fourth-largest reserves of hydrocarbon resources, Turkmenistan legitimately and consistently calls for the establishment of a sound and reliable international energy supply system and the drawing up of plans and projects for cooperation in world energy markets appropriate to modern realities. We believe that it is now time for the United Nations to adopt consensus decisions on universal political and legal mechanisms to govern global energy cooperation.

As members know, at previous General Assembly sessions, the President of Turkmenistan launched a number of initiatives on energy security and mutually beneficial cooperation in the energy sector. The realities of modern life affirm the relevance of such initiatives. As a step towards those initiatives, Turkmenistan proposes that States Members of the United Nations consider in depth the establishment of an international legal framework to govern the operation of an energy supply system, taking into due account the interests of hydrocarbon producers and transit and recipient nations.

As a first step in that direction, we believe that it would be appropriate to draw up a draft resolution during this session on the establishment of an expert group to develop the relevant United Nations international instrument. At the same time, we look forward to constructive engagement with all States Members of the United Nations, which, we believe, would significantly help to find common approaches to solving one of the most urgent problems of modern development.

The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in June this year, clearly identified the need to strengthen our efforts on ecological issues and environmental protection. Speaking at the meeting, the President of Turkmenistan noted that, at the institutional level, today's main objective is to merge and complement existing global, regional and national instruments.

It is no secret that the Central Asian and Caspian Sea regions have difficult environmental conditions. We think that the efforts made to date to improve the situation are clearly insufficient. We need a joint and results-oriented action plan that combines the use of scientific, technological, political, diplomatic, administrative and technical measures for effective outcomes in that direction. We therefore propose setting up, in cooperation with the United Nations, a regional centre for climate change technologies in Central Asia and the Caspian basin. We believe that such a structure would enable the countries in those regions to significantly strengthen cooperation on ecological safety. It would promote the effective coordination of national, regional and international efforts and would further mutual understanding and confidence-building towards achieving sustainable development goals.

With regard to international politics, Turkmenistan gives particular attention to the issues of peace and security and to ensuring sustainable development. In that context, one of the main challenges facing the international community today is the need for our joint efforts to ensure non-proliferation and disarmament. As a party to the principal international treaties and United Nations conventions in that field, Turkmenistan expects to continue to fully support global disarmament processes.

We believe that it is relevant to pursue the multilateral dialogue on the validity of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. We propose that a high-level consultative meeting be held next year, under the auspices of the United Nations, to discuss steps to expand the international non-proliferation legal framework. Turkmenistan's initiative is particularly relevant to the practical implementation of steps towards a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. As we know, the agenda of the sixty-seventh session

includes an item on a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia.

Our country is ready to actively cooperate with the Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs and to participate in a number of initiatives in that regard. Given that further improving relevant United Nations agencies may be one practical step in implementing consistent disarmament measures, we think it appropriate to consider the establishment of a United Nations subregional centre for disarmament in Asia.

Strengthening comprehensive, targeted and long-term cooperation with the United Nations is a strategic choice of Turkmenistan and a priority of its foreign policy. As an important part of that cooperation, our country is considering participating in United Nations activities to ensure human development, better living standards and people's well-being; to establish conditions conducive to global economic and social growth; to utilize human creativity; and to promote people's rights and freedoms.

In pursuing those lofty goals and striving to contribute, where possible, to their achievement, Turkmenistan has announced its candidacy for membership of the Economic and Social Council for the period 2013-2015. That decision was made on the basis of the country's current progress in the political, socioeconomic, cultural and other fields, its active role in international processes and its understanding of the responsibilities inherent to membership of the Council. If elected, Turkmenistan plans to use all available means to improve international cooperation for the effective implementation of sustainable development goals. At the same time, Turkmenistan will actively contribute to strengthening the Economic and Social Council by expanding its role in addressing the urgent issue of global socioeconomic development.

The most important element of the modern system of international relations is humanitarian cooperation. To underscore that the humanitarian component is at the centre of the highest principles and values of the community of nations, our country will continue to promote its cooperation with the United Nations on protecting human rights and on establishing conditions conducive to human development. On that basis, given that the United Nations plays a major role in the comprehensive development of humanity and bearing in mind the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, we believe it appropriate during this sixty-seventh session to consider including the humanitarian issues on the United Nations international agenda as a separate issue.

In that context, Turkmenistan proposes establishing a United Nations platform of action for humanitarian affairs with a view to it becoming the political and legal basis for the consolidation of the international community's humanitarian efforts. We believe that such a holistic approach will enable us to galvanize the activities of United Nations agencies, to develop long-term solutions in line with international law and General Assembly resolutions, and to ensure the practical implementation of United Nations conventions on humanitarian matters.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that our foreign policy, which is based on our love of peace, on neutrality and on broad international cooperation, together with the constructive positions advocated by our country, form a solid basis for Turkmenistan's work in the United Nations. In that spirit, we will rely on broad cooperation with all countries of the world in order to strengthen and develop a comprehensive international partnership.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Dimitris Avramopoulos, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic.

**Mr. Avramopoulos** (Greece) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank the outgoing President of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session, Ambassador Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser of the State of Qatar, and to congratulate Mr. Vuk Jeremić of the Republic of Serbia on his election to the presidency of the Assembly at the sixty-seventh session. I also want to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who tirelessly carries on at the helm of our Organization in an ever-shifting global environment.

I wish to affirm our endorsement of the positions voiced in the statement made by the observer of the European Union. As always, Greece remains fully committed to the United Nations, to the values of peace, security, and to raising the living standards of people all over the world so that they may lead lives of dignity.

(*spoke in English*)

At the recent High-level Meeting on the rule of law, the States Members of the United Nations reaffirmed their commitment to one of the most important principles

underlying the international order, which should be our guide in the conduct of diplomacy and international relations. We fully agree with the Secretary-General's opinion that freedom of expression is a fundamental right and privilege belonging to all people, without any discrimination, and should not be abused by anyone in a disgraceful and shameful way.

Unfortunately, there are those who will do everything to provoke, as we have witnessed again recently in the provocative and unacceptable movie which denigrates Islam. Nevertheless, we should strongly condemn all forms of violence, and, in this particular case, the violence against diplomatic missions. There is no justification for it. After all, the measure and limit of every right is the respect of the right of the other.

Greece is dedicated to United Nations efforts to enhance international cooperation on the promotion and protection of human rights. We have therefore decided to present our candidacy for membership in the Human Rights Council for the 2013-2015 term. In this context, we also support the adoption of the European Union Strategic Framework on Human Rights and Democracy and the appointment of the European Union Special Representative for Human Rights as important steps towards a more coherent European policy and approach to human dignity.

The need to respect and protect human rights and humanitarian law is now as urgent as ever. In fact, illegal migration in the Mediterranean region has given rise to a humanitarian crisis. That is why Greece has introduced major legislative and institutional reforms in the fields of asylum and migration.

I now turn to one of the main pillars of United Nations action: peace and security. Greece's neighbourhood has often been at the centre of serious, interrelated security challenges. My country has consistently played a stabilizing role, which we have accomplished through the pursuit of a policy of peaceful resolution of disputes, within the framework of the United Nations Charter, based on respect for international law and the principles of sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. Despite the economic and financial crisis, Greece has continued to participate actively in a number of United Nations missions and operations around the world, including in Kosovo and Afghanistan and in the anti-piracy efforts off the coast of Somalia.

Security in the Middle East remains a crucial quest for the countries of the region and the world community. Greece maintains historic ties of friendship, cooperation and mutual respect with its neighbours in North Africa and the Middle East — countries that, following the momentous events of the Arab Spring, are moving towards successful electoral processes and towards building democratic institutions. The European Union should be there, right by their side, as they build their future.

However, we have not seen successful outcomes everywhere. In Syria, demonstrators faced tanks and a brutal crack-down. On numerous occasions we have called on President Al-Assad to open the way for a transitional authority, comprising all sections of Syrian society. Yet, we are still in a prolonged bloody stalemate that jeopardizes the present and the future of the Syrian people, and stability in our region. The result has been no less than 29,000 victims, 250,000 refugees, 2.5 million Syrian citizens in need. We are convinced that a Syrian-led political solution is still achieveable, and we see no alternative to such a solution. Greece believes that there is no military solution to the Syrian problem.

Peace and security in the Eastern Mediterranean cannot be achieved without a just, lasting and comprehensive solution of the Palestinian issue, on the basis of a two-State solution. We regret the prolonged stagnation in the direct negotiations between the two parties. It is only through negotiations that peace can finally be achieved. We believe that unilateral actions cannot fulfil Israel's quest for security or the Palestinians' aspirations for statehood, which we fully support. The two-State solution should remain feasible on the ground.

I would now like to outline the current position on some salient issues concerning our immediate neighbourhood. The issue of the name of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is, beyond its semantic dimension, an important piece in the puzzle of putting to rest irredentist notions and attempts to rewrite history in our region. I have been informed of what the representative of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia said today in the General Assembly (see A/67/PV.12). Distorting reality in front of the entire international community and using nineteenth-century rhetoric in the twenty-first century is counterproductive and will lead us nowhere. Populism and nationalism make up the worst possible mix for the promotion of

anyone's national interests and the stability of our region.

Greece believes that the solution lies in a fair settlement. That would be a name with a geographical qualifier, since Macedonia is a geographical region that overlaps the territories of three countries, the largest part being in Greece, followed by Bulgaria and then the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. And of course the name must be used in relation to everyone; it is an erga omnes obligation, to use the Latin phrase. When we resolve this issue, we will be able to realize the vast potential in our relations, to our mutual benefit, and Greece will be the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia's staunchest ally and friend in its efforts to fulfil its Euro-Atlantic aspirations. After all, as is well known, Greece is the most important economic partner of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, with a large presence of Greek companies operating there. We also support the European Union-facilitated dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, and we welcome the constructive approach to the talks on the part of the Serbian leadership. Dialogue is the only way to resolve problems in Kosovo, while unilateral measures and escalation, especially in the north, should be avoided by all means.

Less than two years from now, Greece's European Union presidency will launch Agenda 2014, which aims to reinvigorate the European perspectives of all our neighbours in the Western Balkans. Elsewhere in our immediate neighbourhood, Greece is consistently pursuing stronger cooperation with Turkey, through a wide range of initiatives, so that we can improve our relations to the benefit of both peoples. Moreover, Greece continues to support Turkey's candidacy for full membership in the European family, on the condition, of course, that all relevant membership criteria are met and that the necessary reforms are carried out. It is of the utmost importance that Turkey gives tangible signs of full respect for international law and abandons attitudes like the standing threat of casus belli against Greece, or its attitude vis-à-vis Cyprus, which undermines efforts to build trust.

That brings us to the Eastern Mediterranean as a whole, where Greece continues to play its role as a force for peace and stability. Greece supports the efforts of the Government of the Republic of Cyprus to pursue negotiations with the Turkish Cypriot community, under United Nations auspices, aimed ultimately at reuniting the island, according to United Nations resolutions and taking into account the fact that the Republic of Cyprus is a member of the European Union, which currently holds its presidency. However, after 38 years, the division of the island continues and the results of the talks have been disappointing, owing to Turkish-Cypriot intransigence about engaging in constructive talks. We applaud Cyprus's decision to act on its sovereign right to exploit the natural gas deposits in its exclusive economic zone.

We are forging partnerships with other emerging energy players in the region, including Israel and the Arab countries, with which we enjoy traditional relations of friendship and trust. Greece is contributing to bringing stability and economic growth to the Eastern Mediterranean, in order to promote energy security and diversification of sources and suppliers for the European energy markets. A resolution of the Cyprus issue would have a tremendously positive effect, not just for the Cypriots themselves but for Greek-Turkish relations and stability in the Eastern Mediterranean as a whole.

I will conclude with a few words about the economic crisis that Greece is confronting with the help of its partners in the European Union and the international community. The new tripartite coalition Government in Greece is implementing an ambitious economic adjustment programme in order to improve its macroeconomic outlook and achieve fiscal adjustment, while at the same time addressing structural reforms aimed at growth and job creation.

That effort has produced impressive results, especially a significant reduction of the primary deficit. At the same time, the Greek economy has regained more than 50 per cent of its competitiveness in relation to its global trade partners, while the business and investment climate is on a positive path. We are determined to continue along that path, bearing in mind that the Greek people are suffering tremendously from the implementation of the austerity programme.

In a broader view, it is evident that this crisis is not just Greek or European. International economies are intertwined, and therefore ours is also a global crisis. In that respect, we need to examine measures aimed at generating all-inclusive and job-creating growth, measures that will regenerate economies and diminish the social impact of the crisis.

The eurozone, with Greece at the forefront, is making a hard and painstaking effort and adopting new

paths and ways to climb out of the deep economic crisis. The pivotal role and geopolitical importance of Greece in South-Eastern Europe, in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East will emerge as a result of the events unfolding in our neighbourhood. It is indeed a stabilizing role, since our vital national interests are aligned with the promotion of peace, stability, prosperity and regional security. Our advantage is not only our geographical position but also our strong political will to become a cornerstone of stability and security, at a time when uncertainty dangerously threatens our region.

During the past two years, Greece has been portrayed by the global media as a country defined by its economic need. It is true that our country is experiencing a painful transition leading to economic recovery and growth. It is also true that the Greek people have known in their 3,000 years of history crises more serious than the present one. We survived. We excelled. Let me assure the General Assembly and the family of nations that Greece will make it.

We will make it because Greece is larger than its geographical size and more precious than its present fiscal reality. Through knowledge, science and art, Greece is there when progress takes place. Through democracy Greece is present as a global civilization. Through Olympism Greece unites humankind. Through our merchant fleet and our maritime tradition we carry goods all around the world. Through our love for life we constantly remind the world that progress should always be measured on the human scale. Through and by our legacy we will make it once more.

We will make it because Greece is not about asking. Greece is about offering. Let us not forget that Greece holds intrinsic value in the hearts and minds of people irrespective of nationality, race and religion. And that gives us the moral power, the support and the encouragement, along with our partners in Europe, to give to the world and to win our current fight.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Yang Jiechi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China.

**Mr. Yang Jiechi** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I wish to congratulate Mr. Jeremić on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. I am confident that with his ability and experience he will successfully fulfil that lofty mission. I also wish to thank Mr. Al-Nasser for his positive contribution as President at the last session.

The world is undergoing major and profound changes. The trends towards multipolarity, economic globalization and the application of information technology are gaining momentum. Countries have never been as interconnected and interdependent as they are today. Emerging markets and developing countries have never had such strong influence, and cross-civilizational dialogue and exchanges are flourishing as never before. To promote peace, development and cooperation has become the shared aspiration of people across the world and the common pursuit of the international community.

On the other hand, the world is still far from being peaceful. The underlying impact of the international financial crisis and the European debt crisis remains strong. Destabilizing factors and uncertainties affecting global growth have increased. Regional turbulence persists, hotspot issues keep emerging and traditional and non-traditional security issues have become intertwined. The international security environment is highly complex.

Facing both unprecedented opportunities and challenges, we must not allow the outdated Cold War mentality and zero-sum game theory to stand in our way. We should act like passengers who stick together in a boat when crossing a torrential river and seek win-win progress through cooperation. That is the only option for countries around the world. To ensure one's own security, a country should respect and accommodate the security of other nations. To achieve one's own development, a country should actively promote common development. In pursuing one's own interests, a country should take into account the interests of other nations. Only by promoting common security and development for all its members can the international community effectively address complex and multiple security threats and global challenges, resolve increasingly serious difficulties facing development and ensure durable peace and sustainable development in the world. With that in mind, China believes that it is important to do the following.

We should promote equality and democracy in international relations. Mutual respect and equality are basic norms governing international relations. All countries, large or small, strong or weak, rich or poor, are equal members of the international community.

Respect for each other's sovereignty, core interests and choice of social system and development path is a fundamental principle guiding State-to-State relations. We should resolutely promote greater democracy in international relations. A country should deal with its internal affairs itself. Issues involving the interests of various countries should be handled by those countries through consultation. We should remain true to multilateralism and uphold the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the central role of the United Nations in international affairs.

China strives to strengthen political mutual trust and to address problems and differences with other countries through dialogue and exchanges. China does not interfere in the internal affairs of other countries or impose its will on others. China does not allow outside forces to interfere in its internal affairs.

We should seek win-win progress through cooperation on development. As economic globalization deepens, all countries have a high stake in each other's success. We should therefore enhance cooperation and develop common interests to achieve win-win progress with benefits for all. We should tap the potential for cooperation in all countries, increase and develop cooperation, improve cooperation mechanisms and work together to make economic globalization balanced, inclusive and beneficial to all.

We should accelerate the development of developing countries and narrow the North-South gap. We should enhance global development cooperation to ensure that the benefits of development reach everyone. Since the start of the international financial crisis, while maintaining its own robust growth, China has significantly increased contributions to international financial institutions, extended a helping hand to other developing countries and bought more bonds from certain developed countries. That has helped to stabilize the international economic and financial situation and to maintain the economic and social development of the relevant countries.

We should ensure fairness and effectiveness in conducting global governance. Facing increasing global challenges, the international community should strengthen coordination and cooperation, establish a fair, equitable, flexible and effective system of global governance, properly address the various global issues and promote the common well-being of humanity. China supports the United Nations in enhancing its authority, efficiency and ability to address new threats and challenges through the required proper reform.

It is important to advance the building of a global system of economic governance with a focus on reforming the international financial system, rapidly implement the quota and governance reform plans of the International Monetary Fund and other financial institutions, and increase the representation and voice of emerging markets and developing countries. We should fully implement the outcome and consensus of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (resolution 66/288, annex), further develop international cooperation on sustainable development and discuss the establishment of a post-2015 international development agenda based on actively implementing the Millennium Development Goals.

We should launch a process of open, transparent and democratic intergovernmental consultation, with development and poverty reduction as the core objectives. We should also fully leverage the role of civil society and the private sector in that task. Together with all other parties, China is ready to actively participate in reforming the international system and in global governance and to jointly face the various global challenges.

We should pursue common progress by embracing the diversity of civilizations. According to ancient Chinese philosophy, the world will be a great place when all things thrive without harming each another and when various efforts are pursued in parallel without their clashing. We should encourage exchanges and mutual learning among different civilizations and social systems, draw on each other's strength through competition and comparison and make progress by seeking common ground, while maintaining our differences. We should respect the diversity of the world and the right of all countries to independently choose their development path. China encourages dialogue and exchanges among civilizations. We should replace confrontation with dialogue and bridge differences with inclusiveness in order to make the world more harmonious and to ensure common progress for humanity.

We should seek common security amid growing interdependence. No country is immune to the complex and multiple security threats and challenges in the world. We should foster a new thinking on security that is characterized by mutual trust and benefit, equality

and coordination. We should adopt a holistic approach to address both the symptoms and the root causes of the various security challenges and should build a peaceful and stable international and regional security environment.

The United Nations should fully play its role in maintaining international peace and security and in establishing a fair and effective mechanism for common security. We must resolve disputes through dialogue and negotiation and oppose the wilful use or threat of force. We must oppose all forms of terrorism, separatism and extremism.

West Asia and North Africa are undergoing profound changes. China respects and supports efforts by countries in those regions to independently deal with their internal affairs. We respect the aspirations and calls of people in those areas for change and development. The unique features of those regions in terms of religion, civilization, history and ethnicity must be respected. We hope that the relevant parties will settle differences through inclusive and constructive political dialogue and that they will resolve problems peacefully.

Safeguarding peace and stability in those areas, upholding the fundamental and long-term interests of Arab countries and ensuring the growth of friendly China-Arab relations will remain a central goal of China's policy towards such regions. We will continue to tirelessly strive, together with countries in those areas, to promote peace and development in line with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

China is deeply concerned about the stalled Palestinian-Israeli peace talks and the economic and humanitarian difficulties facing the Palestinian people. The turbulence in the region should not divert international attention from the Palestinian issue. China supports the Palestinian people in establishing, on the basis of the 1967 border, an independent Palestinian State that enjoys full sovereignty, with East Jerusalem as its capital. China supports Palestine's membership of the United Nations and other international organizations. China urges both Palestine and Israel to take concrete measures to remove obstacles and to work for the early resumption and substantive progress of the peace talks.

China is deeply concerned about the ongoing tension and worsening humanitarian situation in Syria. We call on all relevant parties in Syria to put an immediate end to the fighting and violence, to implement the relevant Security Council resolutions, Mr. Kofi Annan's six-point plan and the communiqué of the foreign ministers' meeting of the Action Group for Syria (A/66/865, annex), and to launch an inclusive political dialogue and a Syrian-led political transition as soon as possible. China is open to any political plan that is acceptable to all parties in Syria. The relevant parties of the international community should play a positive and constructive role in that regard, credibly support Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States, in conducting impartial mediation, and strive to set in motion and move forward the process of political transition in Syria.

The Iranian nuclear issue has reached a new, critical stage. The relevant parties should remain committed to a diplomatic solution and begin a new round of dialogue as soon as possible. In the spirit of respecting each other's concerns, we should act with flexibility and pragmatism to expand common ground and overcome differences, seek early progress in dialogue and negotiation and, over time, achieve a comprehensive, long-term and appropriate solution to the issue. China has always supported efforts to uphold the international nuclear non-proliferation regime and will continue to work with the parties concerned and play a constructive role in seeking a peaceful solution to the Iranian nuclear issue through dialogue and negotiation.

The Asia-Pacific region has maintained general stability and rapid growth for many years, thereby making important contributions to global stability and prosperity. Given the growing threat of shrinkage in the global economy and increasing volatility in the international situation, maintaining peace, stability and sound growth in the Asia-Pacific region is crucial to ensuring the well-being of its people and meets the broader interests of the international community.

We should fully respect the reality of a diverse and interdependent Asia-Pacific region, and continue to follow the approach of regional cooperation — building consensus, making incremental progress and accommodating each other's comfort levels — that has proved effective over the years. We should promote regional development with greater determination, advance regional cooperation with increased resources, and handle differences with longer-term interests in mind so as to uphold the peace, stability and prosperity of the Asia-Pacific region.

As an important participant in building the international system, China is committed to sharing development opportunities with other countries and to working with them to overcome various challenges and realize security and development for all. China will stay the course of peaceful development. We seek a peaceful international environment in which China can promote its own development. By so doing, China will contribute to global peace and development. China is firm in upholding its core interests. At the same time, it respects the legitimate right of other countries to protect their interests. We seek to expand common interests with other parties for the sake of the common good.

China has contributed a total of some 21,000 personnel to United Nations peacekeeping missions and taken an active part in international cooperation on counter-terrorism, anti-piracy and non-proliferation efforts. In our efforts to resolve major international and regional hotspot issues, we have urged the parties concerned to seek peaceful solutions through negotiation and thereby played an important and constructive role in easing tensions and achieving the political resolution of those issues. China has made remarkable progress in pursuing peaceful development and will continue to follow that path in the years to come.

China will enhance friendly relations and cooperation with all other countries on the basis of the five principles of peaceful coexistence and strive to promote a new type of relationship among major countries based on mutual respect and win-win cooperation. Following a policy of building good relationships and partnerships with neighbouring countries, China has actively expanded exchanges with its neighbours.

China has contributed to over 50 per cent of Asia's growth for many consecutive years. We have endeavoured to build mechanisms of mutual trust and political cooperation with other Asian countries and appropriately to address differences and frictions among relevant countries. On the basis of firmly upholding China's sovereignty, security and territorial integrity, we have worked with our neighbours to maintain sound relations and overall stability in the region. China treats other developing countries as good friends and good partners; we therefore support each other and seek common development on the basis of equality.

By the end of 2011, the Chinese Government had built over 2,200 projects that are important to the local economies and people's lives in the countries concerned. We have cancelled the debts owed to China by 50 heavily indebted poor and least-developed countries. We have trained over 60,000 personnel in various sectors for 173 developing countries and 13 regional and international organizations. All of that has contributed to the economic and social development of other developing countries.

China has taken an active part in reforming the international system and global governance, and assumed its due share of international responsibilities and obligations as its capabilities permit. We are working to build a fair, equitable and non-discriminatory global trading system and a more equal and balanced new global partnership for development. We support a greater role for the Group of Twenty as the premier forum for international economic cooperation, as well as the efforts of emerging markets represented by the BRICS group — Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa — aimed at exploring a new model of global cooperation.

The global economy is at a critical stage, and achieving full recovery and sustained growth will be a long and difficult task. Last year, despite a challenging economic environment both at home and abroad, China registered a gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate of 9.3 per cent, and made good progress in adjusting its economic structure and improving people's lives. Since the beginning of the year, in order to address some new problems in economic performance, the Chinese Government has stepped up anticipatory fine-tuning of the economy and introduced a series of targeted policy measures. That has boosted market confidence and ensured steady growth.

China's GDP grew by 7.8 per cent in the first half of the year, and the country has enjoyed sound economic and social development. China is still in an important period of strategic opportunities for development. Industrialization, urbanization, the application of information technology and agricultural modernization will continue to unlock our great potential for development. We have the confidence, means and ability to maintain steady and robust growth and achieve long-term, sound and sustainable development.

During its twelfth five-year plan for the period 2011-2015, China's domestic market will become one of the largest in the world. Its total imports are expected to exceed $10 trillion, and direct outbound investment

is expected to exceed $500 billion. That will create enormous business and job opportunities for the world and provide good opportunities for other countries' development.

The Diaoyu Islands have been an integral part of China's territory since ancient times. China has indisputable historical and legal evidence in that regard. Japan seized the islands in 1895 at the end of the Sino-Japanese War and forced the Chinese Government of the time to sign an unequal treaty to cede the islands and other Chinese territories to Japan. After the Second World War, the Diaoyu Islands and other Chinese territories occupied by Japan were returned to China in accordance with the Cairo Declaration, the Potsdam Agreement and other international documents.

By taking such unilateral actions as the so-called island purchase, the Japanese Government has grossly violated China's sovereignty. This is an outright denial of the outcomes of the victorious anti-fascist World War and poses a grave challenge to the post-war international order and the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. The moves made by Japan are totally illegal and invalid. They can in no way change the historical fact that Japan stole the Diaoyu Islands from China and that China has territorial sovereignty over them. The Chinese Government is firm in upholding China's territorial sovereignty. China strongly urges Japan to immediately stop all activities violating China's territorial sovereignty, take concrete action to correct its mistakes and return to the path of resolving the dispute through negotiation.

The Communist Party of China will soon hold its eighteenth National Congress. We are confident that the important meeting will lead China's reform, opening-up and modernization drive to a new stage. The facts have shown and will continue to prove that China's development is peaceful, open, cooperative and win-win in nature. We will work with the international community to follow the trend of history and the call of the times and build a harmonious world of enduring peace and shared prosperity.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Espen Barth Eide, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Norway.

**Mr. Eide** (Norway): Leadership is about making choices. It is about the ability to make the right decision at the right moment and to have the stamina to deliver accordingly. It is about the will to help shape the future of individuals, nations and the planet. And it is about the courage that comes with seeking peace with one's enemies, as Yitzhak Rabin once told us. Leadership is also about creating the conditions for people to choose how to live their lives. Freedom is more than the mere absence of physical or legal obstacles.

The very purpose of the United Nations is to promote freedom for all people — freedom from want, freedom from fear, and the freedom to live in dignity. People are only truly free when they are able to choose the way they want to live their own lives, regardless of race, gender or sexual orientation. It is the freedom of a woman to choose when to have children and also when not to have them. It is about her freedom from intrusion of her physical integrity, as well as her right to think and say what she wants. It is about the freedom that allows mother and child to survive birth, and the freedom that allows every child to live a healthy life, receive education and walk to school without fear of land mines or cluster munitions. It is about the freedom of every man and every woman to organize, to speak out and to have their say as society progresses.

Those freedoms lay the ground for development and prosperity. They give men and women a chance to build a better future for themselves and for their families. Some people can only dream about those freedoms, but when they do exist they are often the result of collective action by families, communities, regions and States and at the global level. At the end of the day, that is why we are here in this Assembly.

In Syria, mass atrocities are continuing. The crisis in Syria started with a call for freedom and dignity through peaceful protests. The Syrian Government bears the primary responsibility. The privileges of the few should no longer stand in the way of the aspirations of the many. The regime of Bashar Al-Assad has lost all legitimacy and must cede power. The violence in Syria must stop.

Even in war, there are rules. All parties have clear responsibilities under international humanitarian law. To any party that commits violations of these principles, I say this: "You are all individually responsible. When justice prevails, you will be held accountable for the crimes you have committed. Do not expect to be pardoned by stating that your opponent committed the same crime."

When the United Nations was formed in San Francisco in 1945, we collectively decided to establish

a Security Council to act on our behalf. The permanent members were then entrusted with the right of veto. My country's delegation at the time was led by Mr. Trygve Lie, who would later become the Organization's first Secretary-General. On behalf of my country, he cast his vote in favour of the right of veto for the five permanent members, as did many other small and medium-sized countries. They did so not only to reflect the world order of the day, but also to ensure that the Council would have genuine authority to make decisions and be able to act on our behalf. They did not do so because they held certain States to be superior to others.

Therefore, and in the light of the Syrian drama, my message to the members of the Security Council is that people in the Arab world, in Europe, in Asia, in Africa and in the Americas are watching with horror how history is repeating itself. Once again, the permanent members of the Security Council are divided and unable to protect people on the ground. In its absence, extremists on all sides are free to kill, maim and rape. We now expect the members of the Council to act. We expect them to put away outdated ideas of zero-sum games or spheres of influence and to strive to seek a common position. Enough blood has been shed.

The verdict is harsh against those who choose the wrong side of history. They must not allow narrow self-interest to block the winds of change that the vast majority of members of this Assembly applaud. President Al-Assad of Syria was not forced to take the path of conflict and confrontation; he could have opted for compromise and cooperation. Elsewhere in the world, quite different choices are being made.

Today in this Assembly, we have heard how Myanmar's reformist President Thein Sein is opening the door for a free and democratic Myanmar. I commend the courage shown by the Myanmar Government. I also commend the courage of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. She has chosen to talk to the very people who once held her in confinement.

Earlier today in Addis Ababa, the leaders of the Sudan and South Sudan made the choice to end the bloody conflict that has marred their peoples' lives for decades. The Sudan and South Sudan had again been on the brink of war, but by signing today's agreements they have opted for peace. We salute the African Union, which has, in close partnership with the Security Council, helped make that choice possible.

In Colombia, the Government and representatives of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia have made the wise choice of entering into formal negotiations in order to end another age-old conflict.

As Norway's Foreign Minister, I am the Chair of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of International Assistance to Palestinians. We met on the eve of this session of the General Assembly. I want to take this opportunity to share with Member States my deep concern about the state of play in the Israel-Palestine relationship. Exactly one year ago, we agreed here in New York that the Palestinian State-building process had reached a level where the institutions of State were in place. Great expectations were created, only to be frustrated.

Time is running short — shorter than many seem to understand. There is significant fatigue among the Palestinian population. They may become inspired to look for alternative options — options that would severely hamper the prospects of Palestinians and Israelis alike. I see a similar fatigue emerging among the countries that are funding the Palestinian authorities.

The two-State solution is the only path to sustainable peace, but the prospect of realizing a Palestinian State based on the two-State solution is diminishing as the expansion of Israeli settlements continues. Those actions remain the main obstacle to peace and they must stop. To get the peace process back on track, we need to break the impasse and reinstall the trust in a political horizon based on the final status issues. Negotiations remain the key to achieve that; they must start now.

Leadership is also about trust. To achieve our goals, we need a strong United Nations. I applaud the Secretary-General's tireless efforts aimed at reforming the internal workings of the Organization. We have elected a Secretary-General to lead, but we must allow him to do so. Intergovernmental micromanagement of what would be the chief executive's prerogative in any modern organization is nothing but the opposite of making the United Nations work.

To conclude, leaders have real choices. Leaders have real responsibilities. Humankind shapes its own future. Failing to solve the most critical challenges of our time not only harms those who suffer under poverty, war or oppression; it also deprives people of the conviction that they too can shape their own future. And that very conviction, that belief in oneself and each other, is what will make freedom from want, freedom

from fear and the freedom to live in dignity possible for all. That is the purpose of our leadership.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Shaikh Khalid Bin Ahmed Al-Khalifa, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Bahrain.

**Shaikh Khalid Bin Ahmed Al-Khalifa** (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): It gives me pleasure to congratulate Mr. Vuk Jeremić on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. I am confident that he will successfully manage the session thanks to his competence and his rich and long experience in diplomacy in the service of his friendly country, the Republic of Serbia. I also express our great appreciation for the President of the Assembly at its last session, Ambassador Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser of the fraternal State of Qatar, and thank him for the vital role he played, the constructive issues he advanced and his excellent management of the work of the sixty-sixth session. We are proud of him as a seasoned diplomat from a State member of the Gulf Cooperation Council, and wish him every success in his future endeavours.

Let me also express our great appreciation for Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and thank him for the strenuous efforts he has made to enhance the effective role of the Organization in various fields. We look forward to a renewed role for the United Nations compatible with the Secretary-General's new vision so that the Organization will be able to address the major challenges before it.

Since joining the United Nations, the Kingdom of Bahrain has worked tirelessly to promote the noble purposes and principles of the United Nations, in particular, the maintenance of peace and security and the development of cooperation and friendly relations among nations on the basis of mutual respect. Guided by full respect for those principles, I am honoured to represent a country that acts upon its international commitments and has laid the foundations of a modern State through initiatives, planning and political and organizational vision. We seek to build a modern society that is well organized and committed to its values in various fields, notably education, health, employment, vocational training, economic reform and the advancement of women.

Our country, Bahrain, has opted for dialogue as an approach to all its modernization efforts aimed at meeting the requirements of its long history. We conducted municipal elections in the 1920s and parliamentary elections in the past few decades. Important results have been achieved in providing a greater degree of equality, participation, transparency, political rights and human dignity. That is truly a historical milestone on the path towards building a society based on competitive sustainability, justice, the rule of law, equality and the consecration of the principles of popular participation and representation in the decision-making process.

Notwithstanding all those remarkable national achievements, since last year the Kingdom of Bahrain has faced some serious challenges to its security and stability, which it has addressed in full transparency, commitment and honesty. In that context, we established the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry to ascertain the truth and provide redress. Consequently, we launched a comprehensive dialogue among the various sectors of society that resulted in a series of constitutional and legislative reforms encompassing all aspects of life — political, economic, social and legal.

Against that backdrop, His Majesty King Hamad bin Issa Al Khalifa of Bahrain proposed the creation of an Arab court of human rights to lay the foundations of an environment conducive to the protection of human rights and the prevention of their abuse in the Arab world, using the model of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, the European Court of Human Rights and the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights. The Council of the League of Arab States endorsed that historical initiative, and arrangements are currently under way to establish the legal basis for the court's establishment. We hope that the court will become a reality in the near future.

Last week, consistent with our efforts to build a pluralistic Bahraini society and in full respect for the protection and enhancement of human rights, the Kingdom of Bahrain approved more than 90 per cent of the recommendations made by the Human Rights Council in Geneva during its Universal Periodic Review, including a possible accession to the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

The challenges and threats facing our region have led the States members of the Gulf Cooperation Council to realize the need for greater synergies among them. They have endorsed the proposal of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz

Al-Saud, to move from cooperation to union as a means of addressing those challenges and threats and building capacities to achieve a Gulf Cooperation Council society based on a shared vision of the future that responds to the accelerating pace of the world and answers to the aspirations of the peoples of the Gulf region. They are convinced that their interests and gains can be served only through solidarity and unity with a view to preserving national independence and State sovereignty and to meeting the needs arising from the strategic transformations on the regional and international scenes.

My country believes that the United Nations has an indispensable role to play in addressing international and regional problems and finding appropriate solutions to them. Our region dearly needs that role to be fulfilled, given the catastrophic and fast-paced developments taking place in Syria. The international community, represented by the United Nations and its organs and bodies entrusted with the maintenance of international peace and security, is called upon to unify its position with a view to putting an end to the humanitarian suffering of the Syrian people and finding a political solution to the crisis that will end the violence and bloodshed, preserve the unity of Syria and the cohesion of its people, and spare the region as a whole serious repercussions that could spill far beyond the borders of Syria.

The United Nations must therefore shoulder its responsibilities to protect unarmed civilians without allowing the Organization's procedures and mechanisms to impede its ability to prevent crimes against humanity from being committed. It must set aside narrow geopolitical interests and proceed to attain the supreme goal of protecting civilians in armed conflicts and wars. My Government welcomes the appointment of Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi as Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States, and wishes him every success in his endeavours to achieve the legitimate demands of the brotherly Syrian people.

On the basis of the same humanitarian principle, we should also stand by the Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar in their ordeal and provide them with assistance and support while providing good counsel to the Government of Myanmar in that regard.

Although the Syrian crisis is preoccupying the international community today, the Palestinian question remains the core issue for the Arab States and the international community. The Kingdom of Bahrain believes that it is imperative to redouble efforts towards a just, durable and comprehensive solution, notably through the creation of an independent Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in conformity with the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Arab Peace Initiative and the decisions of the international Quartet. We are extremely concerned at attempts to violate the sanctity of the holy sites in Al-Quds Al-Sharif and the attempts to alter their identity.

We call on the international community to support Mahmoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine, who is striving relentlessly to defend the cause of his occupied country and to achieve a just and comprehensive peace in the region. We therefore urge the international community to demand that Israel cease its settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territories and dismantle settlements that jeopardize the chances for peace. We also stress the need to implement the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions by putting an end to ongoing Israeli violations and aggression, and to ensure the principles of international legitimacy, notably the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, which prohibits any geographical or demographic alteration in occupied territories. We look forward to peace in our region, which would serve the interests of all its peoples.

One tenet of our foreign policy is to enhance peace and security in the region. In that regard, Bahrain reaffirms its unflinching position in favour of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. That will be possible only by compelling Israel to implement relevant international resolutions, to adhere to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and to subject its nuclear facilities to the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Moreover, we stress that the Islamic Republic of Iran must fulfil its commitments in full and transparent cooperation with the IAEA. Indeed, nuclear weapons constitute a serious threat to peace and security in the entire region, and various parties must therefore assume their responsibility for peace and security and refrain from the language of intimidation, threats and counter-threats that have recently dominated our region.

In that regard, we stress the importance of an excellent preparation process for the 2012 conference to be held pursuant to the agreement reached in the Final Document of the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation

of Nuclear Weapons (NPT/CONF.2010/50 (Vol. I)). We also reaffirm that the principle of establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East in no way precludes the right of all nations to access nuclear technology for peaceful purposes, provided that they do so in full transparency and abide by the IAEA guarantee system.

While the States members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) have extended their hand to their neighbour, the Islamic Republic of Iran, they have unfortunately found no positive Iranian response that could facilitate confidence-building, peace and security. On the contrary, we have had to endure constant interference in our internal affairs from our neighbour. Recently, Iran has reiterated menacing threats to GCC Member States, in contradiction of the spirit of good-neighbourliness, thus generating tension and distrust in the region. More importantly, the Kingdom of Bahrain reaffirms the need, either through direct negotiations or through arbitration by the International Court of Justice, to resolve the problem of the three United Arab Emirates' islands of Abu Musa, Greater Tunb and Lesser Tunb that are occupied by the Islamic Republic of Iran.

With regard to the situation in brotherly Yemen, we are aware of the need for a successful transitional period in order to achieve security and stability in the country, in line with the agreement reached within the framework of the GCC initiative and its implementation mechanisms. We welcome the steps taken by Mr. Abdrabuh Mansour Hadi Mansour, President of the Republic of Yemen, to launch a national Yemeni dialogue, and we are fully confident of his wise leadership of Yemen during this critical transitional period, so that the aspirations of the Yemeni people can be realized.

In that regard, the Kingdom of Bahrain welcomes the convening of the donors conference for Yemen, held in Riyadh and sponsored by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and fully supports the recommendations and conclusions agreed upon with a view to building a brighter future for brotherly Yemen, as well as the outcome of the meeting of the Friends of Yemen, held today in New York.

We also reaffirm the unwavering, principled and consistent position of the Kingdom of Bahrain, in solidarity with the Kingdom of Morocco, regarding the preservation of the territorial integrity of Morocco and the peaceful settlement of the Moroccan Sahara issue pursuant to relevant Security Council resolutions.

In regard to the current political developments in Somalia, the Kingdom of Bahrain welcomes the election of Mr. Hassan Sheikh Mohamud as the new President of the Somali Republic in the context of the transitional process. We call on the international community to offer its support and assistance in the restoration of peace and security in the country and in the preservation of Somalia's territorial integrity and political independence. We commend the efforts of the Somali Government, together with the international community, to restore peace, stability and cooperation, particularly in combating piracy in the Horn of Africa.

We have recently witnessed ugly insults and denigration addressed to our beloved Prophet Muhammad — peace be upon him, his family and his companions. A typical example of that is the shameful video that the Kingdom of Bahrain condemns in the strongest terms, and which led to violence and destruction around the world. Our concern is compounded by the unjustified aggression perpetrated against the diplomatic mission of the United States of America in Benghazi that killed Ambassador Christopher Stevens and a number of innocent American diplomats, in flagrant violation of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations of 1961.

In spite of these serious developments and repercussions, we should not let that gloomy scene overshadow the spectacle of the crowds that took to the streets in Libya the following day to condemn that abominable attack on the American mission. We are all responsible, as peoples and nations, to teach each other about respect. We need to redouble our efforts to prevent the recurrence of insults to religions, prophets and other religious symbols as Allah commands us in the Holy Koran:

> "We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of A'lah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is all-knowing and acquainted" (*The Holy Koran, XLIX:13*).

The Kingdom of Bahrain is among the first to have achieved most of the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs) before the prescribed time frame in the fields of education, the empowerment of women, the expansion of social security to vulnerable groups, equal

opportunities for men and women, and the enhancement of health services, notably for children. Therefore, the Kingdom of Bahrain occupies an advanced position at the global level, as reflected in the United Nations Human Development Reports issued during the past few years.

If the international community is to overcome the challenges facing Member States, we must be able to fully shoulder their responsibilities, especially as the deadline for achieving the MDGs is approaching. We are only three and a half years from that deadline. We have to redouble our efforts and review our policies in order to enhance national and regional capacities to avoid imbalances and to overcome challenges. According to the *Millennium Development Goals Report 2012*, and notwithstanding some negative indicators, child mortality has been decreasing across the world, the percentage of those living in extreme poverty has been halved, and over 89 per cent of the world's population now has access to safe drinking water.

However, it seems that other objectives are still unattainable in many countries, and inequalities continue to rise in some areas such as public health that remains dismal and a cause for great concern. That also applies to the scarcity of water resources. We therefore cannot use the global financial crisis as an excuse for reneging on our financial commitments to those countries in greatest need.

In that regard, Bahrain welcomes the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, as well as the Secretary-General's vision with regard to sustainable development. Much remains to be done, however, to ensure that people across the world not only have access to the most basic needs, but that they have the tools to maintain them over time. We must acknowledge that sustainability is not merely a response to needs but rather a principal element of human dignity.

To conclude, I believe that the formidable changes and challenges our world faces today present valuable opportunities that we can exploit through wisdom, courage, patience and joint action. We must work with all our capacity to address the elements that divide us, particularly backwardness, extremism and isolationism. At the same time, we must continue to lend a hand to those most in need. We must use objectivity and honesty to challenge immobility and prejudice in order to achieve the progress, dignity and prosperity to which our peoples aspire.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to Mr. Edouard Niankoye Lama, Minister for Foreign Affairs and for Guineans Living Abroad of the Republic of Guinea.

**Mr. Lama** (Guinea) (*spoke in French*): On behalf the delegation of Guinea, which I have the great honour to lead, I would like first of all to congratulate the President on his election to guide the work of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session at a time when our Organization is facing multiple challenges. That mark of trust placed in him is a vibrant tribute to his country, the Republic of Serbia, as well as to his recognized diplomatic qualities, which augur well for the success of our deliberations. His predecessor, Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, of Qatar, deserves our gratitude and thanks for his excellent work. I should also like to express my Government's highest appreciation to the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his dynamism and determination in the exercise of his mandate.

The theme of this session, "Bringing about adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means", lies at the very heart of the uncertainty that weighs on the future of humanity. The emergence of new forms of violence at the hands of numerous actors and non-State groups, international terrorism, and above all the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, all constitute grounds for concern. While inter-State conflicts have decreased in recent years, intra-State conflicts in certain regions of the world have led to political instability, general insecurity and human tragedies, with their attendant economic, social and environmental crises.

It follows that the peaceful settlement of disputes, as a fundamental principle of international relations, is becoming more indispensable than ever for the maintenance of international peace and security. That principle requires sustainable preventive strategies and concerted efforts on the part of regional and subregional organizations along with international development partners. The critical need for States to promote and defend the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and of international law is the bulwark par excellence against attempts against the territorial integrity and sovereignty of States.

International mediation as a means of prevention or a way to end violence through dialogue, along with negotiation and the achievement of final agreements, should be given pride of place. In that context, the Guinean delegation encourages the rapid deployment of mediators and experts. It also wishes to offer its emphatic support to the Secretary-General's initiative encouraging the role of women in the mediation process.

In developing States, especially in Africa, mediation and settlement mechanisms should be strengthened through capacity-building and the allocation of sufficient resources to assure a holistic and effective approach. The institutionalization at the national, regional and international levels of a culture of peace that includes dialogue between civilizations and religious tolerance is the irreversible path towards a world of solidarity and peace.

In West Africa, where the northern part of our neighbour, Mali, has been occupied for months by terrorist and rebel groups, the strengthening of democratic institutions and the restoration of territorial integrity constitute the primary challenges of note. Guinea reiterates its support for the initiatives of the Economic Community of Western African States and the African Union in their search for a solution to that crisis, whose effects on the countries of the subregion could well be devastating. In that regard, Guinea joins the Government of Mali in urgently demanding the Security Council to deploy an international contingent to restore the territorial integrity of that brother country.

In Guinea-Bissau, the consolidation of peace and stability requires the restoration of all democratic institutions. With respect to the Great Lakes countries, we support the efforts of the international community and the Central African Economic and Monetary Community, which seek to restore peace and security in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which is fundamental for the stability of that country and the region.

In the Horn of Africa, there has been encouraging progress with respect to the peace process in Somalia. The implementation of a new federal Parliament, the adoption of a new interim Constitution and the election on 10 September of Mr. Hassan Sheikh Mohamud as President of the Republic, all demonstrate the commitment of the Somali people, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the African Union and the United Nations to support peace, democracy and reconciliation in that country. The Government of Guinea would like, at this time, to express its warmest congratulations to the African Union Military Observer Mission in Somalia.

Guinea also supports the ongoing negotiations between the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan regarding post-independence issues, in accordance with the African Union road map of 24 April 2011, as approved by the Security Council in its resolution 2046 (2012). We welcome the agreement reached by the parties on sharing petroleum revenue.

In the Middle East, the restoration of lasting peace in the region must of necessity depend on the creation of an independent Palestinian State, living in peace and security side by side with the State of Israel. The situation in Syria increasingly cries out to the international community. We urge the concerned parties to spare no efforts to halt the violence, protect the population and restore peace. My Government reaffirms its support for the declaration on Syria of the recent extraordinary session of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

The adoption on 21 June of the outcome document (resolution 66/288, annex) of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) offered the international community an opportunity to renew its political commitment to sustainable development in all its dimensions — economic, social and environmental. The priority of the international community today should be the effective implementation of the commitments made to take into account the legitimate concerns of all countries, in particular in Africa. To that end, Guinea remains convinced that defining a post-2015 development agenda must take into account the complementarity of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the sustainable development goals resulting from Rio+20 in order to ensure maximum benefit from the subsequent synergy.

In consideration of Africa's post-2015 development agenda, at the proposal of my country, the fifth Joint Annual Meetings of the African Union Conference of Ministers of Economy and Finance and the Economic Commission for Africa Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, held in Addis Ababa in March, and the seventeenth session of the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation, held in New York in May, agreed to promote South-South and triangular cooalition.

South-South and triangular cooperation is now becoming a new modality for international cooperation in order to deal with the debt and financial market crises and the lack of traditional official development assistance and implement international development goals, such as the MDGs and the Istanbul Programme of Action, among others. From this rostrum, I would like to launch an urgent appeal to all Member States and development partners to support that innovative initiative of solidarity by the international community towards Africa. The continent remains the weakest link in the international development mechanism despite its vast potential and its economic performance in recent years.

Since the election in 2010 of President Alpha Condé to the highest office, the Government has undertaken an vast programme of democratization and political, institutional, economic and social reforms. At the political level, a law on the fair reconstitution of the Independent National Electoral Commission, adopted by the National Transition Council, was approved by the President. We hope that that will open the way for the holding of legislative elections by the end of the year.

I would like to reiterate the Government's commitment to continuing to promote human rights and to ensure public freedoms. To meet the various challenges facing the country following the 2010 presidential election, the Government has submitted to the Peacebuilding Commission a request for support and assistance in three priority areas, namely, national reconciliation and unity, security sector reform and youth and women's employment.

Those priorities resulted in a statement of mutual commitment, adopted here in New York on 23 September 2011 in the presence of our Head of State. A year later, the implementation of those mutual commitments has produced encouraging results thanks to the significant efforts of the Government, the United Nations and other partners. I would especially like to welcome the significant progress in security sector reform, in particular the biometric census of troops and the retirement of nearly 4,000 soldiers.

In order to build on those achievements, we believe that Guinea and its partners should benefit from the momentum and trust created by those initial steps to continue the reform by extending it to all components of the security sector, in particular the police and the judiciary. We are convinced that strengthening the security and stability of the country and of the subregion depend on that.

In the economic and social field, there has been significant progress in combating the macroeconomic imbalances and in improving prospects for growth and people's living conditions.

Those policies enabled Guinea to reach the completion point of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative a few days ago, following meetings of the Executive Boards of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. The subsequent foreign debt relief will make it possible to release significant financial resources to investment in basic social services to alleviate poverty. The normalization of relations with creditors, restoring the State's credibility, will promote access to new foreign financial resources. However, the Government of Guinea is aware that reaching the completion point is only a first step and that many challenges must be overcome to launch the country on the path of sustainable growth. Our objective is to rapidly raise the country to the ranks of an emerging economy through the exploitation of its natural resources.

I would like to conclude by reiterating Guinea's firm support for efforts to reform the General Assembly and the Security Council so as to strengthen the effectiveness and democratic governance of our universal Organization.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Rafael Roncagliolo Orbegoso, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Peru.

**Mr. Roncagliolo Orbegoso** (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, on behalf of President Ollanta Humala Tasso and the Government and people of Peru, I wish to congratulate the President of the General Assembly on his election to lead this session, during which we are very honoured to support him as one of the Vice-Presidents. I would also like to congratulate him on his initiative to make the pacific settlement of disputes the central topic of our debate. The pacific settlement of disputes is the fundamental way to eradicate the scourge of war, which, in turn, is the main objective of the Organization and its Charter. The commitment not to resort to the threat or use of force is the cornerstone of international peace and security.

Peru reaffirms its ongoing and resolute commitment to the principles that inspired the birth of the United

Nations: multilateralism, the pursuit of international peace and security, solidarity and cooperation. In that context, Peru solemnly affirms its continuing commitment to the pacific settlement of disputes.

In that task, the International Court of Justice, as the main judicial organ of the United Nations system, plays a fundamental and, fortunately, increasing role, in particular in Latin America. Peru reaffirms its full respect for the work of the Court and calls on States to turn to it to resolve their differences and to respect and comply with its decisions, pursuant to Chapter XIV of the United Nations Charter.

The 123 disputes that had been submitted to the Court as at December 2011 are proof of the fact that the international community is actively committed to the pacific settlement of disputes, to diplomacy and not to war. Recourse to the Court, far from being an unfriendly act, is an eloquent testimony to our desire for peace.

We reiterate our faith in multilateralism and deplore the existence of situations to which, to date, our Organization has not been able to find solutions. The latest and most painful one of these, due to the high toll it is taking in human lives, is the crisis in Syria. Peru condemns the use of force and violence in that country, and calls once again on all parties to the conflict to immediately cease hostilities and to initiate a genuine process of dialogue and peacemaking, in the framework of respect for the independence and sovereignty of that country and for the fundamental rights and freedoms of its citizens.

We support the efforts undertaken by the Secretary-General and the Arab League to find a negotiated and peaceful solution to the conflict. We would encourage the mission of the Joint Special Representative, Lakhdar Brahimi, to continue its efforts.

However, that is not the only outstanding issue. Peru deems regrettable the fact that in more than 60 years our Organization has not been able to find a solution to the legitimate demand of the Palestinian people to establish an independent State and to live in peace within secure and internationally recognized borders. Peru recognizes the Palestinian State, has established diplomatic relations with it and, based on Peru's historical position since 1947 and on international law, supports its admission as a full Member of the United Nations, without detriment to Israel's right to its own security.

Peru also condemns once again the unfair, illegitimate and illegal economic, financial and commercial blockade imposed against Cuba, to which the Organization has been unable to put an end despite the countless condemnations from the Assembly.

We also regret that it has not yet been possible to find a solution to the nearly 200-year-old dispute between Argentina and the United Kingdom regarding the Malvinas Islands. We call upon the parties once again to initiate a dialogue leading to a negotiated solution.

To overcome these and other shortcomings and deficiencies of the current international order, it is urgent to adopt measures within our own Organization, the most urgent one probably being a reform of the Security Council aimed at making it a more efficient, transparent, democratic and representative forum. The United Nations must reflect the realities of the twenty-first century and update the current architecture, which remains best suited to the post-war world of 1945. The current scenario requires that developing countries take greater responsibility for preserving peace and security. We deplore the limited progress made in negotiations on this issue. We consider that the time is ripe to relaunch the reform process, and we call upon Member States to spare no effort in bringing this process to a speedy conclusion.

As a concrete sign of Peru's contribution to strengthening the rule of law, it was my pleasure to deposit yesterday the instruments of ratification of the Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and the Convention on Cluster Munitions, as well as the amendments to the Montreal Protocol regarding ozone-depleting substances. We call on all countries to accede to these instruments, which are aimed at protecting the environment, ensuring respect for human rights and fighting against all forms of impunity. It is a moral duty to ensure that the perpetrators of serious crimes against humanity are duly tried and punished.

The rule of law also requires more inclusive societies. Civil, political and social citizenship must encompass everyone equally. Accordingly, Peru has incorporated into its national legislation the provisions of Convention 169 of the International Labour Organization. Since Peru is the first country to adopt these measures, its indigenous peoples will be able to fully exercise their rights and ensure that all investors

have obtained the requisite social licence, within the framework of State powers.

In spite of all of those efforts, new and diverse threats to the rule of law have emerged. Transnational organized crime, funded mainly by drug trafficking, today constitutes the main threat to democratic societies. The magnitude of this problem requires, more than ever before, combined efforts with an integrated vision of shared responsibility at the global level.

It is for that reason that this past June Peru hosted the International Conference of Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Heads of Specialized National Agencies against the World Drug Problem, in an attempt to resume a political dialogue that had been interrupted for nearly 20 years. That valuable opportunity proved to us that amid our diversity there are many more convergences than discrepancies, and that the will exists to intensify cooperation in this area.

We are confident that this first step will be further complemented by new initiatives that will guarantee greater exchange of information, a better allocation of resources, and better results in reducing the supply and demand of narcotic drugs as well as in the field of alternative development, a topic that will be addressed next November at an international conference to be hosted by Peru.

That Peruvian initiative on the fight against drugs is not the only reflection of our commitment to multilateralism and integration. Since June, Peru has held the presidency pro tempore of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR). We want to see democracy consolidated throughout South America. Many lives have been lost during the long journey towards consolidating democracy in our region. For that reason, we will not be deterred by any circumstance that may threaten that undertaking.

In our capacity as President Pro Tempore of UNASUR, we reiterate that democracy will remain an essential requirement for integration and cooperation in South America. We also hope that South America will become a zone of peace, without exclusions. It is already a nuclear-weapon-free zone, and we will work tirelessly so that it can soon be a zone free of anti-personnel mines. The money currently spent on arms must be redirected towards development and overcoming poverty and inequality.

Peru is peace-loving country and a staunch defender of disarmament. At the international level, we are party to the main disarmament and non-proliferation treaties. Furthermore, Peru hosts the headquarters of the Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean. We promote confidence-building measures with neighbouring countries, especially measures aimed at conventional disarmament to favour the development of our peoples. In that context, we cannot but welcome with enthusiasm and high expectations the efforts made by the Government of President Santos Calderón of Colombia to open the path of dialogue in order to end long years of violence, as justly claimed by the people of Colombia. Peru expresses its best wishes for the success of that initiative.

From the South American perspective, we also aspire to build bridges with all the regions of the world. In such a spirit, Peru will in a few days welcome heads of State and Government of South American and Arab countries to the third Summit of South American and Arab Countries. The Summit has become an important instrument in bringing the two regions closer together and, through it, its member countries have opened a channel for dialogue and political understanding at the highest level. That will afford us the opportunity to develop common interests in areas such as trade, investment and culture, all for the benefit of our peoples.

Thanks to appropriate macroeconomic policies, Peru has continued to grow, reaching a growth rate in 2011 of 6.92 per cent and a 5.7 per cent average rate over the past 10 years. Despite those good results, wide sectors of the population do not fully participate in the benefits of economic growth. Hence, it is time to ensure growth with social inclusion, as President Ollanta Humala Tasso has pointed out since the beginning of his Administration. The new vision that Peru promotes is oriented towards further economic growth and democratic stability as it expands and maximizes social well-being and harmonizes productive activities with environmental preservation. In Peru's view, starting with the Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development, the establishment of the post-2015 development agenda must achieve a convergence of the processes of the Millennium Development Goals with the processes of the sustainable development goals.

Peru's commitment to the United Nations is long-standing and deep. Allow me to conclude by honouring here to three prominent Peruvian diplomats who have held the highest responsibilities within the Organization — Ambassador Javier Pérez de Cuellar,

Secretary-General from 1982 to 1991; Ambassador Víctor Andrés Belaúnde, President of the General Assembly at its fourteenth session, from 1959 to 1960; and Ambassador José Luis Bustamante y Rivero, President of the International Court of Justice from 1967 to 1969. The recognition and responsibilities that those individuals received from the international community show that Peru has always been committed to peace and to the observance of international law. I am pleased to see the Permanent Representative of Peru presiding over the debate this evening.

As a co-founder of some of the main regional forums, such as the Andean Community, the Union of South American Nations and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, Peru has always been a standard-bearer for integration and for positive, respectful relations with all countries of the world and, in particular, with the countries of our region and neighbouring countries. As a basis of that policy, Peru has always trusted — and will continue to place its trust — in the strength and primacy of international law and in the peaceful settlement of disputes. It is with that conviction that the Government of President Ollanta Humala Tasso reiterates its staunch adherence to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply. May I remind delegations that statements in the exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

**Mr. Al Habib** (Islamic Republic of Iran): Today, in the Assembly, the Prime Minister of the notorious Israeli regime made a series of entirely baseless allegations against my country. At this late hour, I do not wish to take the precious time of my colleagues to reply to such unfounded statements, which I will not dignify with an answer other than to categorically reject them, in particular regarding the nuclear programme of my country, which is exclusively peaceful and in full conformity with our international obligations and undertaken in exercise of our inalienable right to use nuclear science and technology for peaceful purposes.

I also do not wish to take the valuable time of my colleagues to explain the very well-known history and record of my country — a country that has no record of aggression in its centuries-long history; a country that is party to all major international instruments banning the production and use of weapons of mass destruction, namely, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention, and that is fully committed to all its relevant legal obligations under such treaties; a country that is proud of having proposed the idea of establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East and that continues to strongly support its realization; and a country that has never been involved in terrorist activities but has lost more than 17,000 of its citizens, including nuclear scientists, to martyrdom at the hands of foreign-backed terrorists; a country that has been the main victim of the modern use of chemical weapons in nearly 600 attacks, which resulted in the injury or martyrdom of more than 100,000 Iranian citizens, including more than 7,000 injuries among civilians stemming from nearly 30 attacks on Iranian cities and villages.

Likewise, I do not wish to refer to the totally dark record of the Israeli regime in ruthlessly killing innocent women and children and committing genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity over more than six decades. The 33-day war against Lebanon and the 22-day barbaric attack on Gaza, together with its inhuman blockade of the Gaza Strip, are only a few recent examples of such atrocities.

Nor do I wish to describe the dark history of terrorist activities committed by the current regime, whose roots are in terrorism, and which is the founding father of State terrorism as used in the recent history of war.

What I would like to bring to the Assembly's attention is only a very small part of the dark history of this regime, namely, its record of non-compliance with the international instrument regulating weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and its related obligations under the United Nations Charter and international law. Not only is the Israeli regime the only non-party to the NPT in the Middle East, but, despite repeated calls from the international community, it has never intended to become party to it. The worst of it is that in a statement on 11 December 2006, the then Prime Minister of the Israeli regime admitted its position on nuclear weapons, which, as has been repeatedly stated by the 120 States members of the Non-Aligned Movement, "poses a serious and continuing threat to the security of their neighbours and other States".

Taking into account these realities, and the Final Document of the 2010 NPT Review Conference (NPT/CONF.2012/50 (Vol.I)), adopted by consensus, 189 States party to the NPT, including the United States and other significant supporters of the Zionist regime, unanimously appealed to that regime, by name, to accede to the NPT without conditions, and to put all its clandestine nuclear activities under international safeguards.

Now the Prime Minister of the regime has shamelessly and hypocritically raised an outcry, and, by his baseless and absurd allegations about my country's exclusively peaceful nuclear programmes, tried to abuse the tribune of the General Assembly to distract Member States' attention from the danger of its nuclear arsenals, clandestine nuclear programme and unsafeguarded nuclear facilities, which are the only source of threats to peace, security and stability in the Middle East and beyond. Instead of making baseless allegations against other countries in the region, this regime must obey the repeated demands of the international community and accede promptly and without conditions to the NPT as a non-nuclear-weapon party, as well as to place all its nuclear-related facilities under the comprehensive International Atomic Energy Agency verification system.

The international community should also continue to exert all possible pressure on this regime, particularly during the upcoming 2012 NPT-related Conference on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, in order to force it to abide by international demands. Similarly, this regime, which is also not a party to WMD-related treaties other than the NPT, and which, by developing weapons of mass destruction, tries to solve its inherent legitimacy problems, must be compelled to comply fully with all its international obligations.

While the use or threat of use of force on any pretext is a grave violation of the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law, as well as the norms of international relations, the officials of the Israeli regime, who, rude as they are, threaten countries in the region, particularly my country, with military attack on a daily basis, Iran has the strength to defend itself, and reserves its full right to retaliate with full force against any attack. At the same time, the international community should live up to its responsibilities and exert pressure on this regime to end all this irresponsible behaviour in a volatile region such as the Middle East.

Finally, for the second time in the recent history of the United Nations, today, in the General Assembly, an unfounded and imaginary graph was used to justify a threat against a founding Member of the Organization. It is worth mentioning, however, in our increasingly interconnected world, and in the information age, it is hardly possible for nations to be fooled by such absurd devices. It is evident that no amount of slanderous deception or smear campaigning by the Zionist regime can obscure its dark history or divert attention from the reality.

**Mr. Kodama** (Japan): My delegation would like to exercise its right of reply in response to the statement made by the representative of the People's Republic of China on the issue of the Senkaku Islands.

In his address in the general debate (A/67/PV.9), Mr. Noda, the Prime Minister of Japan, stressed that various international issues should be solved by reason rather than force. He has also repeatedly pointed out the importance of the rule of law, which is one of the foundations of global peace, stability and prosperity, and that any attempt to achieve a country's ideological aims or claims by the unilateral use of force or the threat of force is inconsistent with the fundamental spirit of the United Nations Charter.

The Cabinet of the Government of Japan made a decision in January 1895 to formally incorporate the Senkaku Islands into the territory of Japan, while the island of Formosa and the islands appertaining or belong to it were ceded to Japan in accordance with the Treaty of Shimonoseki, signed in April 1895. It is therefore clear at the outset that the assertion that Japan took the islands from China cannot logically stand. In any case, Japan had been conducting thorough surveys of the Senkaku Islands since 1885. These surveys confirmed that the Senkaku Islands were not only uninhabited but showed no trace of having been under China's control. Based on that information, Japan formally incorporated the Senkaku Islands into its territory.

Japan renounced territorial sovereignty over the island of Formosa — Taiwan — and the Pescadores, ceded by China after the Sino-Japanese war, in accordance with article 2 (b) of the San Francisco Peace Treaty. It was made clear, however, that the Senkaku Islands were not included with Formosa and the Pescadores, by the fact that the United States

of America actually exercised administrative rights over the Senkaku Islands, as part of the Nansei Shoto southwest islands, in accordance with article 3 of the Peace Treaty, and the islands were explicitly included in the areas whose administrative rights reverted to Japan in 1972.

It was only in the 1970s that the Government of China and the Taiwanese authorities began making their own assertions of territorial sovereignty over the Senkaku Islands, which are part of Japan's inherent territory. Until then they had never expressed any objections to Japan, nor did they protest the fact that the islands were included in the area over which the United States exercised administrative rights in accordance with article 3 of the San Francisco Peace Treaty. The posture of simply attributing this difference of opinion between the two countries to the past war is not just unconvincing and unproductive; it is also a way to evade the essence of the issue.

**Mr. Li Baodong** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): On the question of the Diaoyu islands, the Japanese representative once again brazenly distorted history and resorted to spurious, fallacious arguments that defy all reason and logic to justify their aggression of Chinese territory. Minister for Foreign Affairs Mr. Yang Jiechi reiterated China's firm position on the Diaoyu Dao issue in the statement he made to the General Assembly. That position is consistent and clear-cut.

The Diaoyu islands and their affiliated islands have been an integral part of China's territory since ancient times, and China has indisputable historical and jurisprudential evidence to support that claim. Japan waged an expansionist war of aggression against China at the end of the nineteenth century. In the same way that other colonial countries grabbed and occupied the land of many countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America, Japan stole Taiwan and its affiliated islands, including the Diaoyu islands, from China through that war and began its colonial rule over them.

During the Second World War, China, the United States and the United Kingdom issued the Cairo Declaration, which clearly stipulated that one of the purposes of the three countries in fighting that war was to make sure that all the territories that Japan had stolen from the Chinese would be restored to China. The Potsdam Declaration and the Japanese Instrument of Surrender issued in 1945 further confirmed that Japan, as a defeated country, would have to honour its international obligations in good faith, one of which was to return to China all the territories, including the Diaoyu islands, that Japan had stolen. However, despite the many years that have gone by, the Japanese Government still clings to its obsolete colonial mindset, breaches its international obligations time and again, and attempts to continue to occupy the Diaoyu islands.

The recent so-called island purchase by the Government is no different than money laundering. Its purpose is to legitimize its stealing and occupation of Chinese territory through illegal means and to confuse international public opinion and deceive the people of the world. Japan's action constitutes a serious encroachment upon China's sovereignty, with Japan intending to continue its occupation and legitimize the fruits of its colonial policy. It is an open denial of the outcomes of the victory of the world anti-fascist war and a grave challenge to the post-war international order and the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

Any illegal act, no matter how it is packaged, is illegal in nature and never generates rights. That is a basic principle of international law. Japan's act falls into that category and is utterly illegal and void. It will never change the fact that the Diaoyu islands are part of China's territory, nor will it ever shake China's resolve to safeguard its territorial integrity and sovereignty over the Diaoyu islands and their affiliated islands. The Government and the people of China will never waver in their will and determination to uphold China's territorial integrity and sovereignty.

China is capable of safeguarding the integrity of its territory. The Chinese Government urges the Japanese side to put an immediate halt to all acts that undermine China's territorial integrity and sovereignty.

**Mr. Kodama** (Japan): There is no doubt that the Senkaku islands are an inherent territory of Japan, based on historical fact and international law. Indeed, the Senkaku islands are clearly under Japan's legitimate control. China's assertions have no grounds at all. In any case, there exists no territorial sovereignty issue to be resolved with respect to the Senkaku islands. I refrain from entering into any more detailed rebuttal of the statement made by the delegation of the People's Republic of China. The position of the Government of Japan on the issue is as stated previously.

**Mr. Li Baodong** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China firmly opposes the statement made by the Japanese

representative, who not only feels no guilt for Japan's history of aggression and colonialism, but instead makes remarks that do not hold water at all. China is strongly opposed to such a position.

Japan's so-called nationalization of the Diaoyu islands is based purely on the logic of thieves. At the end of the nineteenth century, Japan stole large chunks of territory from China, including the Diaoyu islands, through a colonial war of aggression. We are now in the twenty-first century, but Japan continues to hold on to its obsolete colonial mentality in an attempt to exercise long-term occupation of islands that it stole from China. The entire 1.3 billion Chinese people have expressed strong indignation against that state of affairs and will firmly fight against such practices.

The Japanese act is a rejection of international efforts to end colonialism, an outright denial of the victorious defeat of Japan in the world anti-fascist war and a grave challenge to the post-war international order and international law. China is firmly opposed to that position. China will continue to take resolute and forceful measures to unswervingly safeguard Chinese territorial integrity and sovereignty. The current situation has been caused by the Japanese side singlehandedly. Japan must respect history, face reality, discard illusions, refrain from daydreaming, honour its international obligations, take concrete measures to redress its mistakes and stop all acts that violate and undermine China's sovereignty.

*The meeting rose at 11.20 p.m.*